

GAZA CITY, Gaza Strip (AP) — More than 500 Palestinians are competing for 83 seats on the autonomy council that will run the West Bank and Gaza Strip, officials said Friday. The deadline for candidate registration, which was to expire Friday, was extended for another day because banks were closed on the Muslim holiday and candidates could not pay their \$100 registration fee, said Usama Abu Safiyah, an elections official in the Gaza Strip. He said only PLO leader Yasser Arafat has registered for the presidency of the autonomous government. Palestinians have two votes in the Jan. 20 balloting, one for council candidates and one for president of the Palestinian authority. Some Palestinian leaders have criticised Mr. Arafat's handling of the elections, noting that he has yet to appoint the nine-member elections commission that was to oversee the registration of the candidates. Haider Abdul Shafi, a council candidate and former head of the Palestinian peace negotiating team, complained this week that the process was chaotic and demanded elections be delayed.

King says it is up to Iraqis themselves to freely determine future 'Federation is only one of the options that they might want to consider'

By Ayman Al Safadi
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — His Majesty King Hussein has asserted that any move which the Kingdom takes on Iraq is motivated by its concern for that country and its people, stressing that anybody who maintains silence about the deteriorating situation there is "contributing to the crime" that is being committed against the Iraqi people.

But the King, who emphasised that he has no personal ambitions in Iraq, said that any role that the Kingdom will play in Iraq will be restricted to helping rally the various segments of the Iraqi

people around a plan of action to save their country and themselves "before it is too late."

Speaking to journalists at a meeting in the Royal Court Thursday, the King said, however, that "nothing has been decided yet" on plans to host the Iraqi opposition groups in a conference in Amman with the purpose of articulating plans to end the suffering of Iraqis and prevent the disintegration of the country.

"Our concern for Iraq and our love for Iraqis are the motivation for us in every move we take and everything we say (towards Iraq)... this besieged country where

things have reached a level that a person sells part of his body in order to secure food for himself and his family," said the King.

"Any who maintains silence on this is contributing to the crime which is being exercised against the Iraqi people," said the King who pointed to the enormous natural resources and abilities that qualify Iraq for a leading role in the region.

The King said that Jordan will not impose on the Iraqis any solutions or formulas to govern their country but would encourage the various

Iraqi groups to meet and reach an understanding on how to save Iraq.

"It is time that (representatives of all segments of Iraqi people) met and sent a message to every Iraqi that the bloodbath which is said to be awaiting the Iraqis will not occur," said the King.

He said the Iraqi opposition groups ought to assure their people that they are about to reach reconciliation and that they will work together to prevent a catastrophe in Iraq.

Stressing Jordan's wavering commitment to the

territorial integrity of Iraq, the King said the idea of a federation among the three major components of the Iraqi society is only one of the options that the Iraqis could consider for the future, adding that he mentioned this formula after having heard it from some Iraqis.

Saying that a federation system is a highly advanced and sophisticated form of governance, the King rejected insinuations that such a choice would lead to the disintegration of Iraq.

King Hussein expressed astonishment that voices

which call for confederation between Jordan and the West Bank when people on both sides of the river are free to choose.

The King told the journalists that division in Iraq was manifested in the referendum that was carried out by the Iraqi regime earlier this year when large segments of society were excluded.

"Division would occur through more bloodshed, destitution and suffering and through (the acts of some) neighbours of Iraq who have specific designs and objectives," the King said. "Our duty is to prevent the tearing apart, the loss, and the disintegration of Iraq."

The King, who noted the special relations the Kingdom had with Iraq since the Great Arab Revolt up until shortly before 1958 when the two countries united, said Jordan stood by Iraq during its war with Iran because Baghdad was then defending the eastern gate of the Arab World.

The King said the Kingdom later tried to upgrade the ties with Iraq amidst assurances that Iraq would not interfere in the domestic affairs of others and would not allow the use of Arab arms against other Arabs.

"We were taken by surprise by the catastrophe... the military action which resulted in the occupation of Kuwait... which Jordan unsuccessfully tried to resolve. And just as the Iraqi regime did not listen to the advice Jordan gave it during the Gulf crisis, it is still unwilling to enter into a dialogue that would enable (the Kingdom) to help the Iraqi people," the King said. "Unfortunately, I do not see a window of hope

because the (Iraqi) leadership would not enter into a dialogue that can lead to a result that can help us end the suffering of the Iraqis and save Iraq. The result, as I see it, is a catastrophe in front of us and it will harm others if we do not prevent it from occurring one way or the other."

The King also pointed to Iraq's failure to fulfil United Nations resolutions which, he said, go beyond the destruction of weapons of mass destruction to human rights and other issues.

But despite the lack of cooperation by the Iraqi leadership to help Iraq and its people, Jordan will do all it can to ensure a better future for Iraqis. "We have no designs or ambitions but to play our role in saving Iraq," said the King.

King Hussein noted that the \$1.2 billion debt Iraq owes Jordan is Jordanian taxpayers' money that the government made available to companies "so that they play their role in helping Iraq."

"We do not seek the disintegration of Iraq. We seek to rally the Iraqis together and around each other before it is too late," he said. "All Iraqis, probably including current officials, should determine their future freely so that they can rebuild their country and prevent it from being a point of danger to the Arab Nation and to Iraq itself."

The King expressed be-
(Continued on page 7)
Gen. Kamel opposes federa-
tion — page 12



His Majesty King Hussein addresses journalists at the Royal Court on Thursday (Petra photo)

Sanaa, Asmara set conditions for ending Hanish dispute

SANA (AFP) — Yemen and Eritrea squared up Friday each setting its own conditions for ending a dispute over a strategic Red Sea island captured by Eritrean forces in an armed battle launched a week ago.

Sanaa has demanded the withdrawal of all Eritrean forces from the island of Hanish Al Kabir captured on Monday after three days of fighting in which nine soldiers died.

As a further precondition to any talks, the Yemeni government has also called for the release of all 180 Yemeni prisoners.

But Eritrean President Issayas Afeworki rejected the demands by his Yemeni counterpart Ali Abdulla Saleh out of hand on Friday.

Instead he demanded both sides withdraw their troops from the Hanish archipelago of nine islands ahead of international arbitration.

Hamas, PNA talks fail

CAIRO (AFP) — The Palestinian Islamic group Hamas Friday refused to renounce its violent campaign against Israel after reconciliation talks with the Palestinian Authority failed to end its opposition to the peace process.

The Islamic resistance movement, (Hamas), also ruled out taking part in the first Palestinian general elections, due next month under Israeli-PLO autonomy accords, but agreed to avoid inciting supporters to boycott the polls.

Hamas, which has killed dozens of Israelis since self-rule was launched in the Gaza Strip and West Bank town of Jericho in May 1994, also agreed not to launch attacks in areas under Palestinian control.

But it vowed to continue violence in areas under Israeli occupation. "It is a legitimate struggle which is aimed at the occupier and not the authority, which we are not trying to embarrass," said Hamas spokesman Khaled Misha'al.

He also rejected the demand for the release of prisoners, saying it was "not acceptable as a precondition."

The Yemeni government daily Al Thawra condemned the "Stalinist mentality" of Asmara as well as the "logic which consists of occupying (these islands) and then calling for negotiations."

It said: "Sanaa has an inalienable and legitimate right to the traces of its aggression against the Yemeni island, if Asmara does not ensure that the traces of its aggression are removed."

Western diplomats in the Yemeni capital said Thursday that Yemen had boosted its military forces on two nearby Red Sea islands to close in on the Eritrean troops, intending to retake Hanish Al Kabir and negotiate from a position of strength.

But Mr. Afeworki said:

"To request as precondition and in an intimidating manner, that Eritrea alone should withdraw is however inappropriate and unacceptable."

offered to enter into a national coalition with Hamas at the start of talks.

It had also agreed to give 20 per cent of the 83 seats in the first elected Palestinian autonomy council to Hamas, according to one member of the PLO delegation.

Mr. Zaanun, who has described the talks as positive, sought to play down their differences. "We didn't come here to obtain something from Hamas and neither did they."

However, the Hamas representative in Hebron and if an operation takes place there for example no-one can call us to account," he told a press conference.

But political analysts said the militant group's offer fell short of what Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat had hoped would come out of four days of negotiations in Cairo between the authority and its hardline opponents.

He had hoped to persuade the group to take part in the election in return for an end to violence and his PLO-dominated authority had

(Continued on page 3)

Israel may abandon referendum on Golan

Peres, Assad summit in 3-4 months — Savir

TEL AVIV (Agencies) — Israeli Prime Minister Shimon Peres said Friday he may abandon plans for a referendum on any withdrawal from the Golan Heights if a peace treaty with Syria looks likely in the run-up to next year's elections.

Meanwhile, top peace negotiator said in an interview published on Friday that an unprecedented summit between Prime Minister Peres and Syrian President Hafez Al Assad was conceivable in three to four months.

Mr. Peres told Israeli newspaper editors that a referendum would be "superfluous" because the public could express its views in the general elections, set for next October 29.

His predecessor Yitzhak Rabin, who was assassinated by a Jewish fanatic on Nov. 4, had pledged to put to a referendum any "major withdrawal" from the Golan Heights in exchange for peace with Syria.

"I do not believe Israel should show all its cards and spell out the concessions it is ready to make at this stage in the negotiations," the prime minister added.

Mr. Peres, addressing Israeli newspaper editors at a luncheon Friday, predicted that peace with Syria was imminent: "Neither we nor the Syrians have any alterna-

tive but to make peace, I say: There will be peace."

Mr. Peres refused to say explicitly that he would agree to a full Golan withdrawal, reiterating Israel's position that "the depth of the withdrawal will be equal to the depth of the peace."

Positive signals from Damascus were also picked up by French Foreign Minister Herve de Charette, who hosted the Syrian Vice President Abdul Halim Khaddam in Paris earlier this week and is now visiting Israel.

Mr. de Charette told Israel's Haaretz daily Friday that there is "a substantial change in the Syrian position."

"Syria is moving in a new direction, and has reassessed the situation," Mr. de Charette said.

Syria was motivated by "the change in the international environment, the progress already accomplished in the peace process and the prospects it brings for development," Mr. de Charette told a news conference Fri-

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accord with Syria could be reached before Israeli national elections set for October 1996.

Meanwhile, French Foreign Minister Herve de Charette told Mr. Peres Damascus was ready for a fast negotiating process.

Asked by Israel's mass circulation daily Yedioth Ahronoth "when do you see Prime Minister Peres and President Assad shaking hands," Mr. de Charette said: "We are specially concerned with the independence and sovereignty of this country with which we have a very old and very good relationship," Mr. de Charette said.

However, France "does not disapprove" of Shimon Peres' reported offer to recognise Syria's dominance over Lebanon, Mr. de Charette said. Syria has an estimated 35,000 troops in Lebanon.

Asked how Syria responded to his expression of concern for Lebanon's independence, he replied "they approved."

He ended the news conference before he could be asked to explain the apparent contradictions.

Uri Savir also said he believed a history-making peace

(Continued on page 3)

Arafat will have to bend to 'status quo' at Christmas mass

By Luc de Barochez
Agence France Presse

BETHLEHEM, West Bank — Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat will have to curb his fiery temperament and submit to strict ancient Christian rite when he attends his first Christmas midnight mass Sunday in newly autonomous Bethlehem.

The service is tightly regulated by the "status quo" — a pact in force at the principle Christian sites in the Holy Land since a dispute between Orthodox and Catholics over access to the Church of the Nativity helped unleash the Crimean War in 1853.

That conflict, which left tens of thousands dead, ended with the defeat of Russia by an allied force from Britain, France and the Ottoman Empire.

Franciscan clerics, who represent the Roman Catholic Church in dealings concerning the holy sites, met recently in Gaza City with Mr. Arafat — a Muslim — to explain the status quo and the ensemble of sometimes curious but always respected rules governing Christmas mass.

The rules leave no place for a pre-emptive role for the chief of Bethlehem's new ruling power, the Palestinian Authority, which gained control of the town after the withdrawal of Israeli forces on Thursday.

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The ceremony is presided over by the Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem — a post held since 1897 by the Palestinian cleric Michel Sabbah — who must follow a closely choreographed itinerary from the moment of his grand entry into

the gospel of the birth of Christ, accompanied only by fellow clergy and the four consuls-general.

The "status quo," decreed by an Ottoman sultan in the 18th century to bring an end to incessant quarrelling between Catholics, Orthodox, Armenians, and other Christian Churches, was confirmed as "inviolable" in the 19th century Berlin Treaty.

Since then, each occupying power in Bethlehem has respected the pact even if attending Israeli authorities had the habit of arriving late for Christmas mass each year.

The status quo requires that the Latin Christmas — the Orthodox celebrate the birth of Christ on Jan. 6 and the Armenians on Jan. 18 — be celebrated in the Church of Saint Catherine, a Franciscan edifice adja-

cent to the Church of the Nativity.

The fourth century Church of the Nativity is reserved for the exclusive use of the Greek Orthodox, the oldest of the Christian denominations in the Holy Land and the one responsible for more than half of all the holy sites.

The entrance to the Nativity basilica is through a 1.25-metre opening called the "humility gate." The Latin patriarch is only permitted to pass through the gate on his way to the Cave of the Nativity.

The status quo also applies to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre and the Church of Gethsemane in Jerusalem, with rules just as precise and arcane as in Bethlehem.

As the Israeli writer

(Continued on page 2)

Ciller behind in polls — Turkish newspaper

ANKARA (R) — A leading Turkish newspaper, in a media war ahead of general elections this weekend, on Friday published opinion showing Prime Minister Tansu Ciller trailing behind two other parties.

The anti-Ciller Hurriyet daily said Ms. Ciller came first in only one of 13 surveys done in recent weeks. The main opposition Motherland Party (ANAP) was ahead in six of the polls and the Islamist Welfare Party (RP) led five others, it said. ANAP and RP came in a dead heat in the remaining survey, it said.

Although newspapers have been openly flouting a pre-election ban on publishing polls, an Istanbul court on Friday ordered the day's issues of Hurriyet and the tabloid Posta confiscated for publishing surveys, the

Anatolian news agency said. The same court had Hurriyet's sister paper Milliyet and another paper confiscated on Thursday for a similar poll.

Hurriyet and Milliyet have backed conservative ANAP leader Mesut Yilmaz for Sunday's elections as part of a bitter circulation war with rival daily Sabah.

The pro-Ciller Sabah devoted many of its columns on Friday to scathing attacks on the opposition leader. "Yilmaz has done nothing of note in his whole political career," it said.

The newspaper this week quoted unnamed polls which said more than 20 per cent of voters, mostly women, were still undecided, and predicted that many of these votes would go to Ms. Ciller.

Former Premier Yilmaz has urged conservative voters

to abandon Ms. Ciller and unite behind him against the Islamists.

Ms. Ciller's party has urged electoral authorities to fully enforce the ban on pre-election surveys.

Hurriyet on Friday said most opinion polls showed Ms. Ciller, Turkey's first woman prime minister, in third place behind Yilmaz and Welfare's Necmettin Erbakan.

It published charts of three opinion polls it said were carried out by independent firms. ANAP and Welfare were set to garner around 20 per cent of the vote each with Ms. Ciller several points behind, it said.

Ms. Ciller called the elections 10 months before they were due after her minority government lost a parliamentary vote of confidence in October.

Pro-Kurdish party seeks active role in Turkish politics

ANKARA (AFP) — Turkey's newly-founded pro-Kurdish People's Democracy Party (HADEP), which backs a peaceful settlement to the country's Kurdish conflict, is bidding for an active parliamentary role following the December 24 general election.

"We must enter parliament to play an active role in Turkey's politics, particularly toward a peaceful solution to the Kurdish problem," HADEP Deputy Secretary General Mehmet Zeynettin Unay told AFP in an interview.

"I think we'll receive the necessary 10 per cent vote and be represented in parliament by some 50 deputies," he predicted.

HADEP is strong in Turkey's mainly Kurdish-populated southeast, scene of a separatist rebellion launched by the outlawed Kurdish Workers Party (PKK) 11 years ago.

Rail engineer blamed for Cairo collision that killed 75 people

CAIRO (AP) — Police on Friday blamed a rail engineer for the crash of two passenger trains that killed 75 people, saying he was speeding at 110 kilometres an hour despite heavy fog.

The engineer, Mahmoud Mahmoud, was being held under guard in a hospital, where his right leg was amputated after Thursday's collision, police sources said.

Mr. Mahmoud's short-haul train plowed into the rear of another southbound train, a passenger express that had slowed because of the morning fog blanketing the rail line along the River Nile.

The engineer was charged on Friday with causing death by negligence, the police sources said, insisting on anonymity.

The force of the crash sent rail carriages hurtling over each other, and derailed cars smashed into wooden shops lining both sides of the track

More than 21,000 people, including PKK rebels, members of security forces and civilians, have been killed in violence in the region since then.

"We have no organic links with the PKK," Mr. Unay insisted. "And we have never approval of violence by the ... sides" the Turkish military and the PKK.

Mr. Unay said that for a settlement "the Kurdish identity should be guaranteed by the constitution" and bans on free discussion of the Kurdish question should be lifted.

"And later the Turkish government and representatives of Kurds should start talks for a peaceful solution," he said.

Cengiz Candar, a leading political analyst, recently suggested in a commentary that in the near future HADEP might even play a role similar to Sinn Fein.

In 1983, Turkish Cypriots, who account for about a quarter of the island's 750,000 people, declared a breakaway state in the north under the protection of 30,000 Turkish troops.

The territorial dispute has put NATO members Greece and Turkey periodically close to war. The United Nations maintains 1,200 peacekeepers on Cyprus along the de facto frontier, which passes through Nicosia, the capital. U.N.-sponsored peace talks between the two communities have broken down repeatedly over failure to agree on confidence-building measures aimed at reuniting the island as a twin-zoned federation. The two sides also have been unable to agree on the terms governing eventual union.

Earlier this month, Richard L. Beattie, President Bill Clinton's special envoy on Cyprus, met with President Glaftos Clerides and Turkish Cypriot leader Rauf Denktash in an effort to restart the peace process. Results of those meetings were inconclusive, reports said.

It was not immediately clear whether Mr. Holbrooke, who announced on Tuesday he was retiring from the foreign service to return to private life, would stand a better chance of persuading the two sides to resolve their differences.

The bill was pushed through at the insistence of House Speaker Newt Gingrich, who has described Iran as "the most dangerous country in the world."

Administration and congressional sources told the daily that Mr. Gingrich for weeks held up the passage of a \$28 billion intelligence community spending bill to force the White House to accept a covert programme for Iran.

The Senate is expected to take up and approve the House-passed covert plan on Friday, and the sources said Mr. Clinton would sign it into

Holbrooke to try shuttle diplomacy in Cypriot problem

WASHINGTON (AP) — Richard Holbrooke, who negotiated an end to the war in former Yugoslavia, plans another round of shuttle diplomacy next month when he takes on the complex 21-year-old conflict in Cyprus.

Mr. Holbrooke, an assistant secretary of state, plans in late January to visit Greece, Turkey, the divided Mediterranean island itself and several other countries, a U.S. State Department official has said.

Cyprus has been unofficially partitioned since Turkey invaded in 1974.

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Freij: Israeli officials not invited, civilians welcome to Bethlehem Christmas festivities

BETHLEHEM, West Bank (AP) — Bethlehem Mayor Elias Freij pushed for peace when the idea was not so popular. As Israeli troops finally left his town waving a friendly goodbye, he ruefully admitted the bitterness would take time to subside.

Israeli officials, he suggested, are not necessarily welcome at the town's first Palestinian-run Christmas festivities on Sunday night.

"For 28 years, Israelis were represented here by their military governors. Maybe in three years we'll invite them," said Mr. Freij, who is also the tourism minister in Yasser Arafat's Palestinian National Authority.

Mr. Freij later said Israeli tourists could come to Bethlehem as long as they were not armed. "They are welcome, provided they come without guns," Mr. Freij said. "We want a peaceful ceremony, and no visitors will be allowed to carry arms."

Many Israelis travelling through Palestinian towns carry arms for protection, and most Jewish settlers are armed.

The Israeli army announced Friday that it would bar Israelis from entering Bethlehem through Sunday. The order was in line with army practices to keep Israelis out of PLO-ruled areas in the first few days after the handover of power to the new government.

On Thursday evening, the Palestinian self-rule government took over this town just west of Jerusalem. In a cacophony of church bells, gunfire and cheering crowds, the last Israeli troops withdrew from Manger Square and over 850 Palestinian police took up positions in the town.

Bethlehem, the town where Jesus was born, thus became the sixth West Bank town — in addition to the Gaza Strip — to come under Palestinian control as part of the Israel-PLO

autonomy accords. Ramallah and much of Hebron will also be evacuated before Palestinian elections Jan. 20.

Although Muslims outnumber Christians in the town by 35,000 to 15,000, the Christmas celebrations this year are expected to be a manifestation of all Palestinians' national aspirations.

About 10,000 gathered in Manger Square to witness the Israeli pullout. Fireworks burst and gunfire crackled as Israeli troops left their police headquarters on the square in a convoy of 11 jeeps. Celebrities mobbed the last jeep and an Israeli soldier standing on the back bumper waved goodbye.

That marked the end of Israel's occupation in the town, which began in June 1967 when Israel took the West Bank from Jordan and the Gaza Strip from Egypt, along with other territories. Now, for the first time ever, Palestinians are in charge.

"This is a historical night," an exultant Mr. Freij told the Associated Press. "At long last, the Israeli occupation has left this town. It's time for us to prove that we are capable of running our affairs by ourselves."

"This is the beginning of a difficult road ahead," the 78-year-old Freij added.

Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat, a Muslim, was to visit Bethlehem for the first time on Sunday, Christmas Eve, and deliver a speech from the roof of the Church of the Nativity before a crowd expected to number in the tens of thousands.

Mr. Arafat is coming on Saturday afternoon, with his wife Suha and their baby daughter Zahwa.

Mr. Freij said no other world leaders — including Israeli Prime Minister Shimon Peres — were invited to the festivities.

Mr. Freij's rueful tone was in contrast with a



A Christian Palestinian policewoman touches Biblical town's 45,000 Christians are preparing to celebrate their first Christmas under PLO rule after 28 years of Israeli occupation (Reuters photo)

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CHRISTMAS GREETINGS: HRH Crown Prince Hassan Wednesday conveys Christmas wishes to leaders of the Christian community in the town of Husn, near Irbid. During a visit to the town as part of a tour he made in the Irbid Governorate, Prince Hassan asked Christian leaders to convey his congratulations and best wishes to the rest of the community. Representatives of the community thanked Prince Hassan for his gesture of good-will. Prince Hassan was accompanied on the tour by HRH Prince Rashid Bin Al Hassan, the Irbid governor and deputies from the Irbid Governorate (Petra photo)

Prince Ali celebrates 20th birthday

AMMAN (Petra) — HRH Prince Ali Bin Al Hussein today celebrates his 20th anniversary. Prince Ali was born to HM King Hussein and the late Queen Alia on Dec. 23, 1975. He received his elementary and junior secondary education at the Islamic Scientific College, the American School and the International Baccalaureate school. He joined Salisbury school in Connecticut state in the United States, where he completed his secondary education and graduated in June 1993. In 1994, Prince Ali joined Sandhurst Military College where he got the Brunei Medal of Distinction and graduated with honours. In Sept. 1995 he joined Princeton University in the United States where he currently studies political sciences and history. Prince Ali is the honorary President of Prince Ali club for the deaf and dumb.



WHAT'S GOING ON

LECTURE

* "The Status and Future of the Palestinian Banking System" by Dr. Fouad Bseiso at the Abdel Hameed Shoman Foundation, Jabal Amman at 6.00 p.m.

SHORT STORY RECITAL

* Recital of short stories by Hozama Habayeb at the Phoenix Gallery, gardens St., at 6.00 p.m.

BAZAAR

* Christmas bazaar at the Greek Orthodox Church in the Ruwad Neighbourhood, Fuheis. (until Dec. 22)

EXHIBITIONS

* Photography exhibition, Kingdom Of Peace, by Zohrab Markarian at The National Gallery, Jabal Weibdeh.

'Peres, Assad summit in months'

(Continued from page 1) by warning stations on the Golan Heights under any withdrawal.

Both sides have demonstrated a resolve to make headway since the assassination in November of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin by a right-wing Jew opposed to handing land to Arabs.

More than four years of negotiations between the sides have foundered over the strategic Golan Heights, a plateau captured by Israel in the 1967 Middle East war.

Syria demands a full Israeli withdrawal. Israel will not detail the scope of a pullback until Syria says if peace means full ties, open borders and trade.

Mr. Savir indicated on Wednesday Israel could drop the demand for early warning

stations on the Golan after a withdrawal.

Maariv daily said on Friday that if and when Israel signed a treaty with Syria in parallel it would sign a defence agreement with the United States providing it reconnaissance planes and access to intelligence from U.S. spy satellites.

Israeli officials were not available to comment.

But Israel is sticking by its refusal to detail the scope of a withdrawal before the nature of the peace is defined.

"Under no circumstances will we say. Not before we get down to serious, effective negotiations and not before we know about all the elements of peace," Mr. Savir told Yedioth.

"Israel has no territorial or other ambitions in Leba-

non," the statement quoted Mr. Peres telling Mr. de Charette.

Hamas

(Continued from page 1) process with Israel) while agreeing not to force any body to boycott the elections.

They also announced they had decided to form a joint committee to settle urgent problems that might arise between them.

Mr. Arafa, who had been expected to take part in the final day of negotiations on Thursday, left Cairo without attending the talks when it became clear they had been unable to make significant headway.

Consumer society announces start of national boycott against coffee

By Francesca Ciriaci
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Following the "minimum reduction" on coffee prices agreed to between the Ministry of Supply and coffee importers on Monday last week, the National Society for Consumer Protection (NSCP) announced the start of a national boycott against coffee.

The announcement was made by Mohammed Obeidat, president of the NSCP, during a press conference held on Thursday.

According to Dr. Obeidat, who is also professor of economics at the University of Jordan, the boycott should have a considerable impact on the internal market and coffee sales should drop by 40-50 per cent.

"The reduction on coffee prices which was announced by the Ministry of Supply last week is minimum, has no effective

value and is far below our expectations," Dr. Obeidat said.

While the NSCP called for the coffee prices to be lowered to JD 3 per kilogramme for the quality "Extra", to JD 2.75 per kilogramme for the quality "Special", and to JD 2.25 per kilogramme for the "Rupesta", only one quality, the "Rupesta", went down from JD 4.5 to JD 3.5 per kilogramme.

The NSCP called for the boycott against coffee after a poll on 3,000 housewives showed that 85.6 per cent of them were willing to comply with the boycott and stop buying and consuming coffee.

According to a press statement on the coffee price reduction issued by the Ministry of Supply last Monday, other coffee products will be sold at market prices, which are currently ranging from JD 6.5 to JD 4.5 per kilogramme.

Dr. Obeidat pointed out that the price ceiling was imposed only on the "Rupesta," which is the worst quality of coffee sold on the national market.

The decision to lower the coffee prices was taken by the Ministry of Supply and the coffee importers after a significant price reduction in the international market took place eight months ago.

Over the last eight months, coffee merchants have made at least a 60-70 per cent profit at the expense of Jordanian consumers," Dr. Obeidat told the Jordan Times.

The boycott against coffee was launched by the NSCP starting Thursday and "will last until coffee merchants respond positively to our appeal and lower the prices," Dr. Obeidat told the Jordan Times.

Dr. Obeidat also said this is the first campaign for a boycott in the Kingdom,

and that, until now, people have responded positively.

"We contacted labour unions and political parties and received great support from everybody," Dr. Obeidat said. "The Parliament has also supported us, and private citizens and associations have sent us letters or called us to praise our initiative."

"We also contacted hotels and restaurants and asked them to support the boycott and stop serving coffee. Some coffee shops told us that they agreed to support the boycott," Dr. Obeidat added.

Majda Masri, secretary general of the Jordanian Democratic Women's League (JDWL) and member of the Jordanian Women's Union (JWU), said: "This campaign is very important for the people; if the boycott succeeds, the people will gain confidence and start believing that they have a say (to mat-

ters)."

"Coffee is just a start. If this campaign succeeds, we will start fighting to lower the prices of many other products: (products that are) more important to families' lives, such as rice, vegetables, cleaning products and (benefits such as) health care," Mrs. Masri told the Jordan Times.

She noted that "prices of these products might not be lower in other countries, but average family incomes and salaries there are higher than in Jordan."

"A similar national campaign, calling for boycott against chicken, took successfully place in Egypt about ten years ago, while in Europe such campaigns are launched almost every day by associations, unions or consumer societies. It is time for Jordanian women also to take a firm stand," Mrs. Masri said.

Seminar to orient councils on development means

AMMAN (Petra) — A three-day seminar on the role of municipal councils in local development is to open in Aqaba Monday under the patronage of Prime Minister Sharif Zeid Ben Shaker.

Making the announcement Friday, Zuhair Kayed, director general of the Institute of Public Administration, said the seminar aims to provide council heads with information related to their work and to help them contribute to the development of local communities by orienting them on introducing legislation in parliament.

The seminar will also inform them of cooperation methods in loan acquisitions from the Cities and Villages Development Bank, Dr. Kayed said.

According to the director

general, 122 heads of local councils in the southern regions for Jordan will take part in the meeting, along with officials of local community development centres and the local government.

Dr. Kayed said participants will review working papers submitted by a number of experts dealing with such issues as tourism development, environment protection, pollution issues, financial issues of concern to local councils, and cooperation with the Aqaba Region Authority in developing projects for southern Jordan.

The seminar is being organised by the Institute of Public Administration in cooperation with the Ministry of Municipal and Rural Affairs and the Environment.

According to the director

Jordan receives food, clothing donations for needy children

AMMAN (Petra) — Jordan has received more than 40,000 gifts of food and clothing from benefactors from the United States, Canada, Spain, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom to be distributed to needy children in the Kingdom.

Sharifah Zein Bint Nassar, who supervised the distribution of part of the gifts to children in Wadi Araba and other regions, said Friday that volunteers from the donor countries, assisted by Jordanians, distributed gifts to 350 children out of a total of 30,000 children listed to receive gifts.

The gift shipment arrived in Jordan last Saturday. Children who received the donations live in settle-

ments in the country such as Finan, Qatar, Mudeibeeh, Jada'a, Mithna, and Rajel.

A children's hospital run by a charity organisation in the Mafrqa region also received gifts, according to Sharifah Zein.

She also said that the remaining bulk of gifts will be distributed during the holy month of Ramadan, which starts around Jan. 21.

Sharifah Zein said she was contacted by a charitable group representing the Samaritan Cross Society who told her that volunteers in five western countries had collected gifts for shipment to needy children in Jordan.

The construction of Mafrqa children's hospital was part of the team's projects twenty years ago, he said.

Benefactors have also sent gifts to Bosnia. The team member said, adding that this year, 12 countries are on their donation list.

Workshop studies constraints on women's political participation

By Alia A. Toukan and Mahmoud I. Mufti
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Jordanian women activists discussed ways to overcome constraints and limitations facing women's participation in the political realm in a two-day workshop in Irbid entitled "Realizing the interests of women in the community through organized political work."

The workshop, which ended Thursday, was organised by the Jordanian National Committee for Women, the Konrad Adenauer Foundation, and Al-Kuwa Institute for Human Development.

The workshop featured a comprehensive programme of political-party simulations, lectures, discussion

panels and open fora.

The stated aims of the workshop were to increase political awareness among women and their possible roles in the public arena, to train women representatives in the political front included the creation of societal support facilities, such as day care centres, aimed at helping women meet both their family needs and their political obligations.

Participants in the workshop agreed that attitudes towards women, by both women themselves as well as men, and their role in society are one of the biggest barriers to political participation.

Nadia Bushnaq, a pioneering women activist who ran for Parliament in 1989 and 1993 and lost both times, stated that "politically, the role of women is weak due to the

long as the person is competent. The problem is that most people are still sceptical about women's capabilities and roles. If they are convinced, they would elect women to public office."

She added that the media and education can contribute significantly to altering perceptions of women's roles in the public sphere.

The broader implications of the workshop include the impetus to conduct similar workshops in all major areas of the Kingdom, according to Ellen Khoury, co-director of Al-Kuwa Institute for Human Development.

Changing stereotypical images of women was also emphasised.

Amal Daghhestani, a guest lecturer and author, noted that "men and women don't care who they vote for as

dian women to educate themselves further in the realms of political participation, electioneering and mobilisation, Mrs. Khoury said.

The overwhelming consensus of the participating members of the workshop was that only by such means and venues can Jordan truly achieve a balanced society. Turning a blind eye to just over half of the country's population, the participants disclosed, is unrealistic.

Attending the workshop were invited members and representatives of numerous women's associations, as well as several uninvited women, with evident interest in the programme.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Minister opens health workshop

AMMAN (Petra) — Health Minister Aref Batayneh Friday opened a three-day workshop on diabetes, cancer and heart diseases, organised by the World Health Organisation (WHO) in cooperation with the Ministry of Health and Jordan University of Science and Technology (JUST). Addressing the opening session, Dr. Batayneh said diabetes is a genuine health problem in Jordan, noting that 20 percent of the Jordanian population has diabetes. He added that the percentage of cancer and heart patients also significant, and stressed the ministry's interest in addressing these problems. The workshop seeks to identify the size of these health problems and come up with recommendations capable of helping crystallise a national plan of action to overcome these diseases.

Court rules on bank administration

AMMAN (Petra) — The Industrial Court Thursday passed a ruling, calling on the Arab Land Bank administration to pay its staff a 15 per cent salary increase which should not be less than JD 20 and no more than JD 150. The court, which looked into the dispute between the bank administration and the General Union of Workers in banks, insurance and accounting companies and institutions called on the bank to pay the end

of service gratuity based on the latest salary, less the bank's share of the contribution to the Social Security Corporation. The court ruling fixed the period of six years as the minimum qualifying period for employees moving up the promotion scale.

Former PM to open higher education symposium

AMMAN (Petra) — Former Prime Minister and President of the Jordan National Society for the Enhancement of Democracy and Public Freedoms (JNSEDF) Taher Masri will today open a two-day symposium on higher education, at the Royal Cultural Centre. The symposium, which is organised by JNSEDF, will focus on admission policies, national universities, university education, community needs and the higher education legislation.

IDB approves industrial, tourist loans

AMMAN (Petra) — The Industrial Development Bank (IDB) has recently approved 11 loans worth JD 2,422,000 to finance industrial and tourist projects, including eight existing ones and three new projects. The new projects are set to provide 73 new job opportunities, and to ensure an additional yearly income of JD 562,000.

Russian troops reportedly are still fighting for Gudermes

MOSCOW (R) — Fighting raged in Chechnya's second town Friday as Russian troops tried to drive out separatist rebels, an official for the pro-Moscow Chechen administration said.

But the commander of rebel fighters said his forces were withdrawing from Gudermes at the end of an operation which he said had exposed Russian attempts to hold elections in the rebel region as a farce.

Ruslan Martagov, press secretary of the pro-Moscow Chechen administration, told Interfax News Agency that fierce battles were being waged in Gudermes, 30 kilometres east of the regional capital Grozny.

"The impression is growing that the guerrillas are actively looking for, and finding, a corridor along which to leave the town," Mr. Martagov told Interfax.

"It is impossible to estimate a casualty figure for civilians because military actions are going on there," he said.

N. Korea to return fishing crew

SEOUL (R) — North Korea said Friday it would make a peace gesture by releasing the five surviving crew members of a South Korean trawler seized in May, defusing a dispute between the two Koreas at a time of heightened military tension.

The vessel Woosung strayed into North Korean waters after being released from Chinese custody for illegal fishing.

Pyongyang's official Korean Central News Agency (KCNA) said the crew committed "grave crimes" and should have been punished under North Korean law. "But all the crewmen frankly admitted and made an apology for their crimes and requested a competent organ to leniently forgive them."

Forgiving the crew was "an expression of our warm compatriotic feelings toward the South Korean people and a manifestation of our consistent peace stand for national reconciliation and peace of the country," said KCNA, monitored in Tokyo. But it said the boat would not be returned.

South Korea has repeatedly demanded the return of the trawler and crew, and the incident contributed to a deterioration of relations between Seoul and Pyongyang.

Pyongyang's failure to return the crew was seen as especially provocative after Seoul started shipping free rice to the North on humanitarian grounds following floods that ruined the grain crop.

KCNA said the cremated remains of two crew members shot and killed during the capture would be returned along with the remains of a third sailor who died of illness in the North.

The surviving five crew would be sent home through the Panmunjom border hamlet on Dec. 26 to allow them to spend the new year with their families, it said.

Panmunjom is the only crossing point along the heavily fortified demilitarized zone that has divided the Korean peninsula since the 1950-53 Korean War.

South Korean authorities have said the Stalinist north is massing warplanes and artillery near the zone and could take advantage of political turmoil in the South

Rebels stormed into the town of 60,000 people on Dec. 14 as preparations were under way for Russian parliamentary elections and a poll to elect a new Chechen leader.

They had sworn to disrupt both polls, being held despite continued skirmishes between rebels and troops sent by the Kremlin a year ago to try to end the region's independence bid.

The rebels attacked and surrounded Russian troops in Gudermes, inflicting heavy casualties in some of the worst fighting in the region for months. But they were partially beaten back Wednesday in a major assault by Russian forces.

In a television broadcast, filmed in a mobile studio in the mountains, rebel Commander Aslan Maskhadov said Thursday night he had given an order for his men to pull out of Gudermes.

"We have fulfilled our aim and proved that the election was a farce. We must prove to Russia that armed

to make mischief.

Two former South Korean presidents have been disgraced and are in detention. South Korea's ruling New Korea Party welcomed the release.

"It was very regrettable that North Korea kidnapped Woosung with arms, killed some of its crew members and held them for a long period of time but we welcome their decision to return them although this seems to be a little late," a party spokesman said by telephone.

"North Korea should not repeat provocations that hurt the people's feelings."

Perennial fears of Northern aggression in the South have been heightened by reports of near-famine in the North.

There is also concern Pyongyang is still in flux following the death in July 1994 of the "great leader" Kim Il-Sung.

Kim's son, Kim Jong-Il, has yet to inherit the titles of president and general secretary of the ruling Worker's Party of Korea from his late father.

Two spy incursions from the North this year have convinced many South Koreans that Pyongyang remains unpredictable and hostile.

However, Washington officials have played down any immediate military threat.

On Wednesday, U.S. Defence Secretary William Perry said Washington was closely watching military exercises and food shortages in the North, but it saw no reason to send more U.S. troops to South Korea.

A Seoul Unification Ministry spokesman said: "There has been nothing but North Korea's announcement that it will return the crew members of Woosung."

"Therefore, our government will announce its position on this matter after their repatriation and after listening to what happened to them."

A spokesman for South Korea's main opposition National Congress for New Politics said: "We sincerely wish that the repatriation of the crew members will be a breakthrough opening an era of dialogue and cooperation between South and North Korea in the new year."

South Korean prosecutors probe Chun for slush funds

SEOUL (R) — After indicting former President Chun Doo Hwan for leading a 1979 coup, South Korean prosecutors were digging into his finances Friday amid allegations that, like ex-President Roh Tae-Woo, he also amassed huge slush funds.

State radio quoted a senior prosecutor as saying Mr. Chun appeared to have amassed \$300 billion to 400 billion won (\$39 million to \$52 million) during his 1980-83 term in office.

The prosecutor was also quoted as saying the actual amount Mr. Chun had allegedly stashed away was smaller than what Mr. Roh has admitted to amassing during his presidency but the value was "much higher" when inflation was taken into account.

This had been confirmed Thursday when a prosecution team questioned Mr. Chun, who is now at the police hospital in Seoul, according to the radio.

Mr. Roh has been detained and indicted on charges of accepting \$369 million from 35 business conglomerates after confessing that he built up \$654

million during his 1988-93 tenure. His trial on bribery charges started Monday.

The radio also said Mr. Chun is alleged to have hidden a huge amount of illicit funds in real estate and bonds under the names of relatives. A Seoul prosecution official declined to comment on the reports, only confirming prosecutors had launched probes into the allegations over Mr. Chun's slush funds.

Mr. Chun is in a police hospital under heavy guard after being rushed from his jail cell Wednesday night. He had been on a hunger strike since his arrest on Dec. 3.

"He continues to refuse intravenous feeding and suffers dehydration and malnutrition but his condition remains stable," a hospital official said by telephone.

"But we are prepared to cope with any unexpected accident concerning his health as he is an ageing man."

"Chun is still drinking only barley tea and milk," she said.

On Thursday Mr. Chun was formally charged with

mutiny for masterminding the coup that was followed in May 1980 by an army massacre of pro-democracy rebels in the city of Kwangju. Nearly 200 people were killed by official counts but Kwangju residents say the death toll is much higher.

Along with Mr. Chun, Mr. Roh was also charged with playing a "key role" by pulling troops under his command off the border with North Korea to back the putsch leaders.

Both were also charged with murder and attempted murder for attacks on superior officers and with ordering military units mobilised without authorisation.

Mutiny and murder both carry the death penalty in South Korea, although political analysts believe the disgraced former presidents will receive long prison sentences, likely to be commuted after a few years.

Current President Kim Young-Sam set the stage for the mutiny indictments by ordering punishment for his predecessors.

Gudermes were comparable to those in fighting for Grozny itself — indicating they had suffered dead and wounded.

Interfax said that apart from Gudermes, the rebels were blocking all approaches to the village of Urs-Martan and were in control of administrative buildings there.

Interfax quoted another military source as saying the picture had barely changed in the past 24 hours. The source said the Russian aim in Gudermes was to free Russian troops encircled by rebels near the railway station.

Russian President Boris Yeltsin sent troops to the volatile southern territory on Dec. 11, 1994.

After six months of fighting in which thousands were killed and Grozny reduced to ruins, a shaky ceasefire was declared in June. But the level of violence has been growing steadily.

A Russian army spokesman quoted by Interfax said the rebels were trying to gain control of Gudermes and the villages of Achikoi-Martan, Urs-Martan, Shatoi, Shali and Argun.

The mayor of Gudermes said Thursday that more than 100 civilians had been killed.

An unnamed Russian Interior Ministry official, quoted by RIA news agency, said losses among ministry troops in



Actors Michael Douglas and Annette Bening are shown in a scene from *The American President*. The film received five Golden Globe Award Nominations (Reuter photo)

American President gets 5 Globe nods

LOS ANGELES (R) — The film *The American President* received five Golden Globe award nominations Thursday, while *Leaving Las Vegas* and *Apollo 13* each got four.

The Golden Globes, awarded by the Hollywood Foreign Press Association, are seen as an indicator of which films will win the coveted Academy Award Oscars. Other films nominated for globes were *Bridges of Madison County*, *Sense and Sensibility* and *Get Shorty*.

The American President was nominated for best motion picture in the musical or comedy category, and its stars, Annette Bening and Michael Douglas, were nominated for best actress and best actor in that category. Ron Howard was nominated for

best director for his work on the film, which also got a best screenplay nomination.

The Hollywood Foreign Press Association largely ignored Oliver Stone's critically acclaimed *Nixon*, giving it only one nomination, best actor in the drama category for Anthony Hopkins for his portrayal of the late president.

Apollo 13 and *Leaving Las Vegas* were nominated for best motion picture in the drama category as was *Braveheart*, *The Bridges of Madison County* and *Sense and Sensibility*.

Leaving Las Vegas stars Nicolas Cage and Elisabeth Shue were nominated as best actor and best actress in the drama category.

Actor Jimmy Stewart hospitalised

LOS ANGELES (R) — Actor Jimmy Stewart was taken to the hospital Thursday after suffering injuries from a fall, police said. The 87-year-old actor, who starred in such memorable films as *Frank Capra's It's A Wonderful Life*, *Mr. Smith Goes To Washington*, *Harvey* and *Anatomy Of A Murder*, was taken to a hospital by paramedics around 8:30 p.m. (0430 GMT) after he slipped and fell at his Beverly Hills home, police said. Stewart's condition was not immediately known, but according to local television reports eyewitnesses who were singing Christmas carols outside his home said the popular screen actor was taken out of his home on a stretcher with bandages on his head. Though probably best known for his leading role in the annual holiday classic *It's A Wonderful Life*, Stewart has starred in a wide range of films, including thrillers such as *Rear Window* and *Vertigo*, comedies and even musicals, playing the band leader in *The Glenn Miller Story*. He also starred in an epic western tale of revenge, *Winchester '73*.

Madonna to testify against alleged stalker

LOS ANGELES (R) — A judge ordered singer Madonna to testify against a man accused of stalking her, or face arrest and \$3 million bail. The pop star has repeatedly refused to come to court to testify against Robert Dewey Hoskins, a drifter who allegedly showed up at her Hollywood Hills home on three occasions in two months before being arrested on May 29. In court, attorneys for Madonna argued her schedule would make it impossible for her to appear. But Judge Andrew Kauffman said she was a material witness, "and must be in court." He ordered her to testify on Jan. 2.

Forest owner takes his revenge on tree thieves

STOCKHOLM (R) — A Swedish forest owner fed up with Christmas tree thieves has found a way to get even — pouring sewage on to the branches to generate a foul smell when the tree is taken inside and the frozen sewage thaws. Roger Sallberg in Smaland, southern Sweden, came up with the idea after years of repeated tree thefts. The Swedish News Agency TT reported.

Rome re-opens Spanish Steps after facelift

ROME (R) — The city of Rome has re-opened one of its most famous tourist attractions, the white marble Spanish Steps, closed since May for renovation. The 18th century baroque steps, which offer some of the best views of Rome, were scrubbed clean of the pollution, weeds and graffiti that prompted the one billion lire (\$600,000) facelift. Mayor Francesco Rutelli cut a ribbon to open the sweeping flight of steps after hundreds of coloured balloons were released into the air in celebration. The city hopes to keep the steps in pristine condition by enforcing bans on eating and drinking while sitting on the steps. Vendors also will be banned. In recent years the Spanish steps had been occupied by trinket sellers, and had become a popular meeting place for backpackers. The steps, built between 1723 and 1726, are a masterpiece of baroque architecture linking the Piazza Di Spagna Square with the Church of Trinita Dei Monti.

S. African court orders British spy jailed

JOHANNESBURG (R) — A South African magistrate Friday rejected a bail application by a former British spy and arms dealer wanted in the United States, saying the Briton was likely to abscond.

Paul Grecian, 40, who tipped off the west about Iraq's plans to build a "supergun", was arrested by

Interpol agents when he arrived in South Africa a week ago for a Christmas holiday with his fiancee Elizabeth Powell.

Mr. Grecian is wanted in the United States on charges of bank fraud, perjury and selling U.S. artillery fuse components to Iraq. He was acquitted of similar charges in Britain last month after

the British government acknowledged it had condoned his activities in return for information on Iraq's war plans.

Magistrate Dijon Schnetler said Mr. Grecian faced a possible 25-year jail sentence in the United States and would not voluntarily go there to stand trial.

"The court is of the opinion

there is a likelihood Mr. Grecian would not attend the extradition inquiry," Judge Schnetler said. "It is in the interests of justice to refuse bail." The magistrate said that even if Mr. Grecian surrendered his passport as part of bail conditions and agreed to report to police every day, he would still be able to flee the country.

Sinn Fein anger at Irish prison clampdown

DUBLIN (R) — Sinn Fein, the IRA's political arm, clashed angrily with the Irish government Friday after Dublin scrapped plans to free 10 convicted guerrillas as a reward for a 16-month ceasefire in British Northern Ireland.

Sinn Fein Vice-President Pat Doherty branded the decision disgraceful and said it would put renewed strain on the faltering peace process.

Ireland was underlining its revulsion over a series of killings in Belfast that British security sources blame on an Irish Republican Army (IRA) drive against drug dealers and underworld leaders.

"There's no logic to it. I still see no relationship to the shootings in

Belfast with the punishing of Republican prisoners and their families," Mr. Doherty said.

"Are they trying to use the prisoners as some kind of bargaining counters? I think that is disgraceful," he told Irish Radio in a rare outburst against Dublin.

Ireland made no formal comment but official sources said the guerrillas would be given Christmas parole only.

The news leaked after an Anglo-Irish summit in Dublin at which Ireland's John Bruton and Britain's Prime Minister John Major voiced outright condemnation of the killings.

Neither government officially named the IRA as the culprits. The extremist group has remained silent on the issue.

But Irish officials said it

was reasonable to link the prisoners' decision to the shootings. According to British security experts, the IRA — sometimes using an anti-drugs group cover name — has killed five men this year.

Britain does not regard the killings as a breach of the guerrilla "military ceasefire" but emphasises that no group has a right to set itself up as judge, jury and executioner.

Mr. Major, who stayed overnight and was due back in London Friday, denied Republicans attempts to "soft soap" the public about Sinn Fein's links with the IRA.

Britain refuses to invite Sinn Fein to full talks until its military wing dismantles arsenals that sustained a 25-year war to oust Britain from Northern Ireland.

After the summit, in

which both leaders reported steady progress in a new thrust for lasting peace, Mr. Bruton hit out angrily at the killings and so-called "punishment attacks" meted out by the IRA and pro-British Protestant foes.

"We joined together in condemning these appalling brutalities. And we want them to stop," the Irish leader said.

The number of punishment beatings for such "anti-social" offences as joyriding and drug-dealing has doubled since the ceasefires were called.

Ireland has given early freedom to 35 IRA prisoners since the ceasefire. Britain refuses to follow suit but is giving Christmas parole to 70 Republicans and 60 "loyalists," whose Protestant comrades operate a matching truce.

Both sides were away on holiday until the new year.

Princess Diana will want unlimited access to her sons, Prince William and Harry. She may agree to a clean break settlement of £15 million (\$23.07 million). Separated since 1992, they could under British law be divorced within three months.

Prime Minister John Major faces a delicate task playing honest broker to the sparing royals.

It is he who will help define the future role of Princess Diana, who sees herself as a caring "queen of hearts" who wants to be a roving ambassador for Britain.

Some cabinet ministers and diplomats are lukewarm about such a role but no doubt her media pulling power and commitment to a string of charitable causes.

Experts insist divorce would not pose a constitutional crisis for Prince Charles but church leaders, like Archdeacon of York George Austin, warned him about having a relationship outside marriage with Ms. Parker Bowles.

Divorce, unlike the abdication crisis of 1936 when Edward VIII was forced to step down to marry divorcee Wallis Simpson, is seen as the way to stop the rot this time.

Constitutional expert Lord St John of Fawsley said: "It was clear that things were going to go on getting worse. The display of disunity in the royal family was damaging national unity as well as the monarchy."

But Princess Diana, a masterly media manipulator who knows that whatever happens she will always be mother of the future king, has issued a stark warning.

In that television interview, the once demure young bride said of her determined new self: "She won't go quietly. That is the problem. I will fight to the end as I have a role to fulfill and I have got two children to bring up."

Britain waits to see if Diana agrees to divorce

LONDON (R) — Prince Charles was resigned Friday to becoming king without a queen but Princess Diana appeared in no rush to make snap decisions on a speedy divorce. Eager to quash speculation that has plunged the scandal-ridden monarchy into crisis, Prince Charles vowed Thursday not to remarry if Princess Diana agreed to a permanent parting.

That could spell the end of his relationship with divorcee Camilla Parker Bowles, the love of his life.

One churchman even told Prince Charles: "Be celibate if you want to be king."

But Ms. Parker Bowles, 48, was reported to be ready to support Prince Charles as his "uncrowned queen." The tabloid Sun quoted her as saying: "I will stand by you always my darling."

Queen Elizabeth, seeing the House of Windsor tarnished by the antics of its warring young royals, wrote to Prince Charles and Princess Diana telling them divorce would be best after months of their using the media for a public slanging match.

She felt driven to act after Princess Diana gave a frank television interview in which she admitted to adultery, questioned Prince Charles's suitability as king and labelled royal courtiers "the enemy."

Princess Diana's bluntness brought to a head a situation she had not wanted. Friends said she was devastated by news of the queen's letter being leaked to the tabloid press.

For Princess Diana had said in that interview: "I don't want a divorce but we need clarity on the situation. I await my husband's decision on which way we are going to go."

He stated his position within hours, backing his mother's call for an end to the 14-year-old marriage.

Princess Diana's confidants felt she would agree too — but no speedy decision was likely as the lawyers involved on both

Japan locked in battle over land for U.S. bases

TOKYO (R) — The Japanese government was locked in a court battle with local authorities in Okinawa Friday over land contracts for U.S. military bases on Japan's southernmost island.

The struggle followed a decision earlier this month by Prime Minister Tomiichi Murayama to seek a court order forcing the governor of Okinawa to sign documents extending the leases on some land housing U.S. military facilities which the landowners refuse to renew.

U.S.-Japan security ties have been threatened since the rape of a 12-year-old Okinawan schoolgirl in September, allegedly by three U.S. servicemen.

Okinawa Governor Masahide Ota, with the backing of much of the island's population, has

refused to sign the leases which expire at the end of March.

At Friday's hearing, Mr. Ota urged the presiding judge to hand down a ruling that "can stand the judgment of history."

He said he would not bow to pressure from the central government.

"I decided not to sign (the leases) after deep consideration," Mr. Ota told the court. "It's too bad we failed to secure the understanding of the government and have to fight a court battle."

Officials representing Mr. Murayama's government told the court that Mr. Ota's refusal ran counter to "national interests" and blocked the government from fulfilling obligations in the Japan-U.S. security treaty.

36 die in Pakistan car bombing

PESHAWAR, Pakistan (R) — Rescuers picked through the smoking rubble of shops in the Pakistani city of Peshawar Friday, the day after a car bomb killed at least 33 people and wounded more than 100.

Witnesses said firemen hosed down shops in the Saddar Bazaar area where the bomb exploded outside a crowded garment store at 6:30 p.m. (1330 GMT) Thursday.

Police struggled to control hundreds of onlookers and distraught relatives at the scene. At one point, they baton-charged the crowd, but no injuries were reported.

Hospital sources and officials said at least 36 people had been killed and more than 100 wounded.

State-run Radio Pakistan put the death toll at 42 and the Peshawar-based daily The Frontier Post said 45 people

had been killed and 200 wounded.

"I saw a car blowing up and other cars catching fire," balloon vendor Zafar Iqbal told Reuters from his hospital bed where he was treated for fractures in both legs.

"I wanted to get away, but could not walk because my legs were so painful, so I crawled," he said. He was driven to hospital by volunteer rescue workers.

Mohammad Ibrahim, a sales clerk in the Wadood Sons Garment Store that took the blast's full impact, said he had been in the basement and ran upstairs after the bomb went off.

"But when I reached the ground floor there was a lot of smoke and intense heat so I tore off my sweater and ran back downstairs," he said.

Mr. Ibrahim was among about 30 people who

crewled to safety via an exhaust fan outlet in the basement. He was treated in hospital for shock and smoke inhalation.

A doctor at Peshawar's Lady Reading Hospital said only two out of 20 bodies brought there had been identified.

"We have recently busted eight groups, all Afghans, who have confessed their involvement in the bombing incidents," he told reporters. He did not suggest a motive.

Some officials said the bombings could be the work of supporters of embattled Afghan President Burhanuddin Rabani, who accuses Pakistan of backing his foes in the Islamic Taliban Militia. Islamabad denies the charge.

In other incidents, police said a small explosion wounded one person in Peshawar overnight.

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Jordan Times

An independent Arab political daily published in English by the Jordan Press Foundation
Established 1975

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The Jordan Times is published daily except Fridays.
Subscription and advertising rates are available from the
Jordan Times advertising department.

Unity call isn't enough

HIS MAJESTY King Hussein's assurances Thursday before a representative group of the press that Jordan fully subscribes to Iraq's territorial integrity and unity should lay to rest all speculation about the real intent of the research on the future of Iraq. The King's earlier suggestion that a federal system of government in that Arab country could offer a panacea to the existing division on ethnic and sectarian basis caused an outcry among some circles. The King's suggestion was made in the wake of the current political turbulences that have swept through Baghdad in the aftermath of the Gulf crisis and threatened its unity and territorial integrity. And, as he explained to the journalists Thursday, it was a suggestion that he had heard from some Iraqis in the first place.

On more than one occasion the Monarch reaffirmed that Jordan has no political ambitions or designs on its sister state. Iraq has been and will always be a pivotal and equal partner for Jordan; and its stability, security and prosperity would be translated into Jordanian gains at the end of the day. Jordan, as His Majesty also confirmed on several occasions, would like to see an end to the suffering of the Iraqi people by lifting the crippling sanctions imposed upon Baghdad by the U.N. Security Council.

There are countries in the region which still entertain suspicious thoughts about Jordan's regional role and tend to jump to hasty conclusions about its policies towards its neighbours. Such states see conspiracies when there are none and political designs when all the facts tell another story altogether. The state of affairs in our area has gotten to be so twisted that anything a moderate country like Jordan says or proposes is automatically questioned and suspicion cast on it. No wonder that the proposal for a federation came under such an attack, when in fact, as the King himself pointed out, such countries as Germany and the U.S. thrive and prosper under federal systems of government.

We trust that the words uttered by King Hussein out in the open on the real stance by Jordan on Iraq will put an end once and for all to the bickering and false accusations against us. The peoples and countries of the region must have better things on their minds than to engage in futile and acrimonious arguments over Iraq. What that country needs is not more pious words about the need to safeguard its unity, nor more countries that are vying for control in attempts to determine its future. What Iraq needs more than ever, and most urgently, is a collective international effort, such as we have seen undertaken on Bosnia, Nigeria and Haiti, to save its people from the cruel suffering and hunger. Most of us agree that the regime in Baghdad virtually has no credibility or ability left to save its country. But that does not mean that we should abandon the Iraqi people to their fate and do nothing to alleviate their suffering. An effort should be made now to rescue them.

ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

A WRITER in Al Ra'i hailed the on-going dialogue between Hamas and the Palestine National Authority (PNA) to settle differences between them about handling the Israeli occupation and the Oslo agreements. Mahmoud Rimi said that it is important for the two parties to come to an agreement on the course of action the Palestinians must follow in order to secure their full rights in their homeland. The dialogue will strengthen democracy and political pluralism, which should prevail in the future Palestinian state, and will no doubt remove any lingering fears among the Palestinians about possible internal strife once the Israelis have pulled out from the occupied Palestinian territory, according to the writer. Expressing hope that the dialogue will bear fruit, the writer said opening the door for the opposition group to take part in the negotiations with Israel and in handling the affairs of the future Palestine state will please the Palestinians masses and will help bring about stability and security, which are essential elements for socio-economic development.

A WRITER in Al Dustour praised the Jordanian Consumer Protection Society (JCPS) for its efforts to help the limited-income groups and the Jordanian consumers in general. Bassam Haddadin said that the JCPS, which Jordanian citizens hope will step up its activities in defence of the consumers, has succeeded in winning the hearts and the support of the majority of the Jordanian people because it tackles economic issues of immediate concern to the public. In the writer's view, the society has been giving more service to the public than all the political parties put together because, he said, the society is dedicating its efforts to protecting citizens' interests, something which is still lacking in the work of the political parties. Referring to the society's endeavours, the writer said that its president and members are continually following up with government officials and merchants questions related to high cost of living, the question of prices of basic commodities and services and other issues related to people's daily lives.

Jordanian Perspective

Working to save Iraq and its people

HIS MAJESTY King Hussein's remarks on Iraq two days ago reflected the worries of many Jordanians, who see the widespread suffering and miseries of many Iraqis who are scared of a bloodbath or a civil war if the regime in Baghdad is challenged.

The talk about a bloodbath resulting from a civil war between Iraqi Kurds and Arabs or Shiites and Sunnis might well be a ploy used by the Iraqi ministry of information to neutralise the attempts by Iraqi nationals to take a daring step to topple the regime or to introduce a new political system where Kurds, Sunnis and Shiites can enjoy their rights as equal citizens in a democratic pluralistic society. On the other hand, its occurrence is a possibility that cannot be ruled out. A meeting of Iraqi opposition groups and political figures would send a message to certain Iraqi nationals inside Iraq that they can carry out the changes they feel required without being scared since the opposition groups will agree to a minimum common denominator of priorities.

Such an initiative will neutralise the danger of the 70,000-man Badr forces stationed in Tehran, composed of former Iraqi prisoners of war captured during the first Gulf war, and staffed by Iranian command officers.

Those Badr forces, as it was revealed recently, have Iranian tanks and sophisticated anti-tank missiles as part of their equipment. The first contingent has already reached the Iraqi northern border in case they invade Kirkuk or Mosul, that would guarantee an Iranian hegemony in the area for ages to come.

Though there are over 47 different opposition groups operating from Tehran, Damascus, Saudi Arabia, Cairo and Lebanon, the main strong ones are Al Da'wa Party representing many Shiites and still in control of many areas around Basra and in the Marshes, the Kurdish opposition

headed by Jalal Talabani and Masoud Barzani and some less strong parties and independent personalities who have their significance as representatives of a strong national movement.

A common agenda between those numerous groups can be found if Jordan plays a role in bringing them to Amman to start a dialogue to reach a formula which all would accept and endorse.

Such a formula will be the real message to be sent to many Iraqis who are at the moment inside Iraq and who have actually the desire and the capability to effect the drastic changes required.

There are positive signals that Moh'd Bader Al Hakeem has agreed to send his envoy Hamed Al Bayati as a representative of Al Da'wa Party to the Amman conference which, according to some sources, could take place on Jan. 6.

Moreover, another signal came from Damascus when the former head of Iraqi military intelligence, Wafiq Samara'i, agreed to be one of the main participants in Amman along with 82 London-based Iraqi figures and heads of opposition groups including very prominent names like Majid Al Khoei, Saad Saleh Jaber, Mishan Al Jubouri, Nabil Al Jinabi and Ahmad Al Huboubi.

One of the salient points in Jordan's call is that it does not pre-impose a form of political system on Iraqis to live by.

The King was clear that it is up to the Iraqis to choose a federation, or a confederation or a centralised authority as long as the integrity of Iraqi land and its sovereignty is maintained.

Moreover, Jordan is motivated to launch this initiative by its concern for the Iraqi people and their sufferings. Other players in the area do not have the same honest motive.

Some players are obsessed by their Arab irredentist party and its ideological fervour to annex and unite by force.

Others are worried about their annual quota of oil exports and how much financial loss lifting the sanctions on Iraq will cost them, which is in the range of \$6 billion or \$8 billion. While the Iranian player has always defended the notion that existing Arab states should be subsumed in a Tehran-based Islamic empire, Iraq and Arab nationalism have no legitimacy in Iran's Islamic ideology.

Furthermore, an appeal from Amman to the Iraqis carries more weight of credibility and acceptance of friendship due to Jordan's former stand with the Iraqi people during the last two Gulf wars.

There was a chance to change the regime in Baghdad when President Saddam Hussein was at his weakest point in March-April 1991. But he survived due to three factors mainly: the Sunnis' community's fear of retribution if the regime fell, the elite's solidarity and the opposition's divisions. Moreover, during the Iraqi Shiites' revolt in February 1991, Washington suddenly supported President Saddam out of fear from fundamentalist takeover, which will be pro-Iranian.

King Hussein's initiative will guarantee that the same three factors which worked adversely before will be handled in a positive way: The Sunnis will not fear retribution, the elite's solidarity will be positive with Brig Gen. Hussein Kamel in Amman, and the opposition will have a common agenda for a constitutional pluralistic democratic Iraq.

It is in the interest of all parties in the area to maintain a united Iraq. Its geopolitical weight will always be considerable since the country enjoys a combination of large oil reserves, population and skilled work force.

Religious background to Rabin's assassination

By Israel Shahak

THEY CAN be no doubt that Yitzhak Rabin was murdered for religious reasons. The murderer and his accomplices were sincerely convinced that by killing Rabin (and if possible other Israeli leaders as well) they were carrying out the commandments of the Jewish religion and obeying God. Nor were they alone in holding this view, as comprehensive surveys, carried out by the Hebrew press in religious Jewish neighbourhoods, have indicated. These surveys show a very considerable sympathy for the murderer. It also can be assumed that the cleavage between religious and secular Jews which the murder of Rabin has brought to the surface will from now on play an increasing role in Israeli politics and may yet result, as some observers predicted even before the Hebrew massacre, in a civil war.

Outside Israel, where in contrast to apologetics and propaganda on Jewish themes, real knowledge of Jewish history and religion is sorely lacking, the possibility of such a civil war appears far-fetched. But in Israel, where Jewish history is taught in schools and seriously studied by many adults, and where the real nature of Jewish religion can be directly experienced, the prospect of a civil war between Jews sounds eminently reasonable. After all, a great deal of Jewish history is filled with civil wars, or rebellions accompanied by civil wars, some of them glorified by posterity, or at least by some influential centres of Jewish thought.

Let me quote in this context an article by Labour stalwart Yoram Peri, formerly editor of Davar newspaper, published on March 25, 1994:

"A serious danger exists that the divide between two irreconcilable Israeli political cultures may develop into cleavage with mutual acrimony sufficient to spur a minor civil war... The most significant difference which today divides Israeli Jewish society into two hostile camps — and it is a recent phenomenon — is, not that between right and left, but between the religious or part-religious and the secular... As a factor which constitutes political blocs and antithetical political cultures, religion is crucial... The religious extremists are implacably hostile to the very rudiments of democracy."

However, at that time no Israeli leader, including the secret police (which in this affair exceeded its usual stupidity) paid any attention to Mr. Peri and others like him.

Jewish chauvinism

The reason for this wilful ignorance, fully shared by Rabin himself until it was

too late, is Jewish chauvinism, so prevalent in Israel. All chauvinists falsify the history of their nation in order to make it appear much better than it really is. They also falsify the current situation in order to claim that their nation is "the best," a claim made frequently by Israeli Jews.

When chauvinism is reinforced by religious fanaticism, the combination is especially explosive. Jewish chauvinism is so virulent because the identification of Jewish religion with Jewish nationality prevailed for so long. Let us recall here that democracy was brought into Judaism from the outside. Before the advent of the modern state, Jewish communities were ruled by their rabbis. The deepest wish of Jewish religious fanatics is to restore this state of affairs.

In the long period of time before the advent of the modern state, Jewish communities around the world enjoyed a great degree of autonomy. Where the autonomy was wide, rabbis used it in order to mercilessly persecute Jews of two categories: those who committed religious sins, and even more, Jews who informed on other Jews to non-Jews or otherwise harmed their interests. All the rabbis' persecuting verdicts remained on record in the Talmudic literature and can be used now as precedents by present-day rabbis or scholars.

Among the punishments used against Jewish sinners who, for example, violated the Sabbath or assaulted a rabbi, one can find gouging out of the eyes, amputation of hands or feet and a wide variety of floggings. The death penalty, often in cruel forms such as stoning, was quite common. Public humiliation was much used. Indeed, the old synagogues of Poland, mostly destroyed by the Nazis, were equipped with stocks. The Jewish sinner was put in them and the pious, coming to prayer, spat on him. Of course, similar things were done in England in the 16th and 17th centuries. The crucial difference in that English history books mention such things. Jewish history books published in Britain or the U.S. ignore them.

The sin of informing

Two religious sins which used to be punished by death without trial by the Jewish religious authorities, or by any individual Jew, are even more relevant to the murder of Rabin. The first is the sin of being an informer, defined as a Jew who tells non-Jews about any Jewish affair, public or individual, financial or criminal, and by this possibly cause loss of Jewish property or other damage. (In Hebrew the word for informer, moser, is still one of the worst insults, as the word "collaborator" is among the Palestinians.)

The second religious law relevant to Rabin's murder is "the law of the persecutor" (Hebrew rodef), defined as a person who pursues a Jew with intent to kill. In such a case, it is obligatory on every Jew who may be present to kill or incapacitate the "persecutor" but by the extension of this law, other categories of Jews were included in this term, and hence it became a religious duty to kill them. For example, it was argued by some rabbis in the early 19th century that Reform rabbis who seduced Jews from their true faith and so endangered their souls were worse than those who tried to kill them.

In a famous case in Lvov, (now in Ukraine, then in the Austrian Empire) in 1848, the first Reform rabbi of that town was poisoned together with members of his family, for that very reason. Even more relevant to Rabin's murder is the argument of

(Continued on page 7)

Premises of the Jewish underground

Finally, let me point out that Rabin's murder follows logically from the religious premises of the Jewish Underground of 1984. Informers are being put to death every day in the (Jewish) communities of North Africa and Spain." Another sage, Rabbi Shlomo Luria (in 16th century Poland) chides the Jews of his time for "only cutting off the tongue and gouging out the eyes" of an informer and orders them to kill all-informers without mercy. A later Jewish authority threatens every Jew who refrains from help in the killing of an informer with being killed himself. Murder of informers, or of Jews who, because of their lax religious observance, were thought to be such, went on in Eastern Europe well into the 19th century.

The land of Israel is considered by religious Jews to be the exclusive property of the Jews. Thus, granting Palestinians authority over part of it could well be interpreted as "informing." The relations which developed between Rabin and the Palestinian Authority could, and actually were, interpreted as causing harm to Jews by "informing." Rabin and other Labour or Meretz ministers of Knesset members were publicly denounced as "informers" by several influential rabbis, such as the notorious Moshe Levinger. A widely respected figure, Professor Asa Kasher of Tel Aviv University, took the trouble to enlighten the public by means of a letter to the editor of Ha'aretz about the exact meaning of the term employed by Levinger and the danger of assassination implied in it. His warnings were disregarded by all, including Ha'aretz.

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Let us recall that members of that underground were caught red-handed planting bombs under Arab buses near Jerusalem. The day was a Friday. The bombs were equipped with timing devices so that they would explode a short time after the Sabbath began on that day, when to travel on a bus is a mortal sin according to Jewish religion. At the time, before the intifada, many Israelis used Arab buses, as did many tourists, Jews among them. The only category of people not likely to use such a bus when it exploded were religious Jews.

Discussing the Eritrean attack on Yemen, Taher Adwan, a writer in Al Dustour, said that the aggression surprised Yemen and the Arab World, which continues to be divided and weak. The Arab World abounds with vast oil wealth and it has other natural resources and holds holy shrines but it lacks a united plan to ensure security for this wealth, said the writer. He said that the Arabs had done nothing to restore their sovereignty over the United Arab Emirates islands occupied by Iran and they are expected to do nothing vis-a-vis Eritrea's aggression because they are too weak to make any move.

Calling on the Arab

Eritrean aggression encouraged by Arabs' division

Reviewed by Elia Nasrallah

THE LOCAL press last week discussed Eritrea's occupation of a Yemeni island in the Red Sea. Israel's decision to prevent Jordanians from crossing into the West Bank, the on-going peace process and domestic affairs.

Fakhri, Kawar, a writer in Al Dustour, said Eritrea represents the latest aggressors on Arab countries but it definitely would not be the last. Realising that the Arab countries are too weak to fight back and quite assured that the Arabs would not fight to liberate their occupied lands, the Eritreans were bold enough to launch their aggression on Yemeni territory, said the writer. Before Eritrea, Iran occupied United Arab Emirates islands in the Arabian Gulf, and the Arab World proved unable to do anything against this aggression either, said the writer. He said one facet of the Arab World's impotence in facing aggression was an Arab minister's advice given to Yemen to resort to the International Court of Justice to solve the problem with Eritrea.

THE WEEK IN PRINT

Ahmad Al Misleh, a writer in Al Ra'i, said that the weakness of the Arab World has encouraged the Eritreans to launch their aggression on Yemeni territory. Had Sudan and Egypt been on good terms, Eritrea would not have dared to occupy the Yemeni islands and had the Arab countries in the eastern flank of the Arab World been united, Iran could not have maintained its occupation of the islands in the Arabian Gulf. It is regrettable, said the writer, that aggression on Arab territories has not yet awakened the Arab Nation from its deep slumber and has failed to prompt Arab leaders to take a collective action.

Israel has aimed at humiliating the Jordanian delegation whose members had unsuccessfully attempted to cross into the West Bank to take part in Nablus' celebrations, said Taher Adwan. The Israelis also wanted to deprive the Jordanians and the Palestinians constitute one family whose feelings are the same on both sides of the River. He said that the Palestine National Authority (PNA) should have protested against the Israeli action and taken immediate action to allow the visitors to join their brethren in the liberated city.

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Peace hopes shine on through the end of 1995

By Nicholas Doughty
Reuter

LONDON — The promise of peace triumphed in 1995 with hope for an end to some of the world's bitterest conflicts.

A treaty ended the war in Bosnia. The assassination of Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin failed to derail the Middle East peace process. The guns in Northern Ireland and Haiti stayed silent, even if they still blazed in Afghanistan, Chechnya and Sri Lanka.

As the world approached the millennium and the end of a bloody century, 1995 made a difference. But there were still plenty of clouds to go with the silver lining.

The year had barely started when a huge earthquake struck the Japanese city of Kobe, killing more than 5,000 people.

Two months later, the country was struck by another disaster, this time of human making. Eleven people died and thousands were injured in a nerve gas attack on the packed Tokyo subway system, carried out by the Aum Shinri Kyo religious sect.

For the people of the United States, 1995 was the year when they realized that no one was immune from such acts of terror. A huge car bomb in Oklahoma City killed at least 167 people in April. Two Americans with a grudge against the U.S. government were later charged with the bombing.

In Europe, the war that had torn apart efforts to build a new post-cold war order finally lurched to a conclusion.

The year in Bosnia started with an uneasy ceasefire followed by more fighting, NATO air strikes and massacres, after the Serbs overran two Muslim enclaves — Srebrenica and Zepa — in July.

Then, battlefield reversals for the Serbs and a U.S.-led diplomatic drive finally opened up the road to peace after more than three years of conflict.

Three weeks of grueling talks at a U.S. air force base in Dayton, Ohio, produced



BOSNIA-HERZEGOVINA: A U.S.-led diplomatic drive produced an agreement that promises an end to the war that had torn apart efforts to build a new

agreement to end the war. After the deal was signed by the presidents of former Yugoslav republics in Paris this month, NATO troops flooded into snow-bound Bosnia.

It was a new mission for the old alliance, working for peace beyond its borders alongside Russian troops and others, replacing a largely discredited U.N. mission.

The 16-nation alliance had a good year, except for the whiff of scandal which forced NATO Secretary-General Willy Claes to resign in October. He was replaced by Spain's Javier Solana.

In the Middle East, it looked as though the long conflict between Israel and its Arab neighbours might finally be on its way to resolution, even though a key deal setting the dis-

post-cold war order. The picture shows French soldiers renovating the airport runway which will

serve as their logistic base during the NATO mission in Bosnia (AFP photo)

Irqi leader Saddam Hussein, still in power despite his 1991 Gulf war defeat at the hands of the United States and its allies, remained defiant despite the defection of two of his most trusted aides, both sons-in-law, in August.

It was a year to remember the end of World War II 50 years ago and the terrible, bright dawn of the nuclear age, with the use of the first atomic bombs against the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945.

There were constant reminders of the dangers posed by nuclear weapons, even though the threat of a global holocaust may have faded with the end of the cold war.

The international community agreed in May that a 25-year treaty to prevent the spread of nuclear

weapons and the technology used to build them should be made permanent, not left to expire.

New French President Jacques Chirac then announced that his country would resume a programme of nuclear tests in the South Pacific before the conclusion of an international treaty next year that will ban them altogether.

France's decision, and continued Chinese tests, brought vigorous protests from Asian powers and environmental groups.

For the United States, it was the year when President Bill Clinton clawed back some support at home and rebuilt his credentials on foreign policy. Washington played a key role in Bosnia, the Middle East, Northern Ireland and elsewhere.

Russia, a shadow of its

former superpower self, had a much tougher time.

Although the shattered economy showed some signs of stability, people craving order and relief from hardship voted in droves for the Communists in December parliamentary elections, delivering a major rebuff to President Boris Yeltsin.

Russian troops were humiliated before they finally crushed most resistance in the breakaway region of Chechnya.

Despite a ceasefire, fighting flared again before the end of the year. And Chechen fighters launched a commando-style raid in June in the Russian town of Budenovsk, taking hundreds of hostages. At least 120 people were killed.

Natural disaster struck Russia, too, with an earthquake that killed some 2,000 people in the far eastern town of Neftegorsk.

As Central and Eastern European countries continued their reforms with high hopes of joining NATO and the European Union (EU), 1995 marked the end of an era in Poland.

Aleksander Kwasniewski, a slick former communist, was elected president in November — ending the reign of Lech Walesa, the man who had come to symbolise resistance to communism in the 1980s but who finally lost popular support.

In Western Europe, leaders of the 15-nation European Union reaffirmed their goal of building a single currency by 1999 but some of the steam seemed to have gone out of their drive towards closer political and economic integration.

South Korea was plunged into turmoil as two former presidents were caught up in political and corruption scandals.

Nevertheless, even on the world's poorest continent, 1995 brought at least some good news.

South Africa united behind Nelson Mandela after last year's end-of-apartheid elections and Angola moved closer to lasting peace after two decades of civil war.

Nigeria, Africa's most populous nation, outraged the world by hanging nine minority rights activists. It was suspended from the Commonwealth and faced sanctions.

Central Africa saw fresh bloodshed as Tutsis and Hutsis struggled to come to terms with the aftermath of last year's genocide in Rwanda and generations of unresolved ethnic rivalry.

The feared Ebola virus killed 244 people in Zaire, sending a shudder around the world.

But for ordinary people in many of the places where misery of human making has reigned supreme, 1995 was a year of less bloodshed and fewer tears.

'It's up to Iraqis to determine future'

(Continued from page 1)

wilderness at the controversial discussions of the possible meeting of the Iraqi opposition in Jordan while such meetings by the opposition occur in many other Arab countries with no accusations similar to those levied at Jordan being made against them.

"We do not have ambitions (in Iraq) but look around and scrutinize: You might find that others have such ambitions and designs," said the King, adding that the interest of people come before the interest of individuals.

During the meeting, the King also criticised those who belittle Jordan and its ability to play an independent role in the region.

"Let us be frank and say that it seems that we suffer from an inferiority complex in the sense that a Jordanian cannot be equal to others and that Jordan does not have the ability to say and defend what it believes in," the King said.

The King said this feeling was manifested in the 1950s when the political movement wasted the chance for developing democracy by becoming an extension to political parties in other Arab

countries instead of organising itself around principles derived from the belief that this country carries the legacy of the Great Arab Revolt.

This led to a setback, and democracy was destroyed in the name of democracy, the King said.

The monarch called on Jordanians to work together to protect the democratic march that Jordan restarted in 1989 so that "we can stand in the face of all the enemies of democracy and human rights."

"Many bet that we will fail... And we must be careful to avoid a setback," said the King, who stressed his belief in democracy and the right of Jordanians to play a role in determining their future.

The King urged the press, which he severely criticised last month, to abandon negativism, to seek accuracy and to be more responsible in dealing with the issues at hand.

"As far as press is concerned, we hope that the dialogue will continue so that we reach a formula that will be satisfactory to us and to you and to the rules according to which the press will work in the future," said the King.

Later during a lunch he hosted for the journalists, the King agreed to a request by some journalists to give them time to play for others.

Rabin's assassination

(Continued from page 6)

The interesting proposal attributed to Rabbi Nahum Rabowitz (Yediot Afrouz, Nov. 16) to plant mines and explosive devices around any settlement threatened with evacuation by the Israeli army, follows the same line of reasoning. When Rabbi Rabowitz was asked about the danger, inherent in his proposal, to the life of Jewish soldiers, he answered: "If they obey the order to remove a Jewish settlement then they are wicked Jews," and as such presumably deserve death.

These developments should be seen in the context of the "twofold hatred" directed against non-Jews and secular Jews, preached for some time by the settlement rabbis of the West Bank. For example, Rabbi Yair Dreyfus argued that Israel was about to commit "spiritual apostasy the day the agreement with the PLO takes effect..." In

that era of sin, he opined, Jewish culture would be polluted by what he called "a speedy Arabinization." Dreyfus denounced Israel as "the new sinful Canaanite-Palestinian state to be established now on the ruins of the genuine Jewish-Zionist state. It will not be a Foundation of God's Throne on earth as the state of Israel was expected to become by being true to the Word of God. God may even get to war against His polluted Throne. The Jews who lead us into that sin no longer deserve any divine protection... We shall pursue a merciless struggle against the Canaanite-Palestinian entity," that is against Israel. From here to the approval of murder in the name of God is a very short distance.

It can be assumed that the policies now adopted by Peres of courting religious parties and religious Jews in general will make the situation worse and will

— Middle East International

London: Europe's new ethnic melting pot

A new report suggests that within 15 years almost one third of the British capital will be composed of ethnic minorities. Nicholas Timmins looks at London's changing profile

minorities will be British born, proportion that will

strive for a balance.

On one level London has adapted remarkably well. Only briefly in the 1950s in Notting Hill has there been anything in London that could fairly be called race riots: the 1980s riots in Brixton and at Blackwater Farm having causes far more complex than race alone.

None the less, immigration initially produced the growth in intolerance that almost every wave of immigrants has faced. Its peaks were symbolised by Enoch Powell's "rivers of blood" speech in 1968 and the growth of the National Front in the late 1970s and early 1980s.

But as legislation progressively restricted immigration, governments of both colours began to take positive action to promote good race relations with the result that London now has a record fair better than probably any other European city, where in most cases mass immigration has been far more recent.

The reason, I think, is that we deliberately faced the issues after the growth of intolerance of the 1950s and 1960s," Anne Page, the London Research Centre's chief executive says, defining the passage of the 1976 Race Relations Act as the crucial moment in that.

As a result, London today enjoys a rich mix of people and culture unparalleled by racial harmony, compared to its own recent past and possibly to other large cities in Europe," she says.

In assessing how well the British capital has coped, Anne Page, chief executive of the London Research Centre, and Chris Myant, a spokesman for the Commission on Racial Equality,

world but whole ethnic shopping centres from Soho's Chinatown to Southall's Indian markets that are an intrinsic part of London life, as is the Notting Hill Carnival, a uniquely Afro-Caribbean event that draws in a vastly wider range of the population than Afro-Caribbeans alone. That, he says, "is very different from the odd Chinese or Japanese shop. These are real communities that are part of London and it is something that gives us great confidence and hope for the future."

There remains, he says, however, a darker side, one of unequal opportunities and uneven achievement, fuelled by continuing discrimination. There is a seemingly permanent underflow of racial attacks and violence in parts of London. Employment opportunities still vary widely by race. Among 16-to-24-year-olds, the Labour Force Survey showed last year that 60 per cent of black males were unemployed, a rate approaching three times that of whites. Average weekly earnings for whites in London are just under £400 a week against not much more than half that figure for the ethnic minorities. And while a black and Asian middle class has emerged in growing numbers there are wide variations among the ethnic groups.

The 1991 census showed that among black Caribbeans, there were half the managers there would have been if there was no employment difference between ethnic groups: the figure for the professions being a third. By contrast, among Indians the proportion

in the professions was higher than expected, although managerial numbers were relatively low. The professions employed twice as many Chinese as might be expected. Bangladeshis, particularly, were over-represented among unskilled workers. And despite considerable efforts, the ethnic minorities remain under-represented across wide swathes of city life, not just in professions and top management. The Metropolitan Police, already policing a city a fifth of whose population is from the ethnic minority still has only around 1.5 per cent black and Asian officers.

If there is a long way to go to achieve equal opportunity, the continued growth of London's ethnic minority population, however, is surely less threatening to the white population now than the original immigration of the 1950s and 1960s. Familiarity has bred mutual tolerance. The National Front and British National Party, which once had their bases firmly in London's inner city, now seem to do better in Bexley where ethnic minorities still make up a mere six per cent of the population.

In an increasingly global world, London's cultural and linguistic diversity can be seen as a key competitive advantage, if only the capital has the wit to use it. "Britain's ethnic minorities are an irreversible part of the social, cultural and economic well-being of London," Mr. Ouseley argues. "Employers in London have the opportunities to be the envy of the world with such diversity."

With more intermarriage, more mixed communities, more ethnically mixed children and more diversity, London is set in the 21st century to become a new type of city for Europe — one more like the immigrant cities of the United States, but without, if London gets it right, their segregation.

The Independent

Another Jordanian company to receive ISO 9000 certificate

By Khattab Salman

Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — The number of Jordanian firms certified by ISO 9000 has risen to four in less than two years. The latest company to join the quality seal of approval firms is Non Woven of Jordan, a Noqol Group subsidiary, according to Yeye Dusouquet of Société Générale de Surveillance Yarsley International.

Dr. Dusouquet of the

Geneva-based inspection, testing and certification authority said Thursday that with the advancing peace process in the Middle East, Jordan can expect a continuously improving economic environment and increasing investments.

"However," he said "to succeed in attracting investments in manufacturing and services it is crucial for Jordan to project to the world an image of quality."

Dr. Dusouquet added

that 70,000 companies throughout the world have now adopted the ISO 9000 quality management standard, with only 340 companies in the Middle East of which 286 are Israeli companies.

He revealed that a fourth

Jordanian company was re-

commended to be awarded

the ISO 9000 through Team

International locally.

Suhail Tulail, director

general of Non Woven Com-

pany of Jordan told the Jor-

dan Times that his firm was

recommended to be awarded

the ISO 9000 certificate last

Wednesday, and that he ex-
pects the awarding of the cer-

ificate to take place in early January.

"We began the process of
adapting to ISO standards
seven months ago, and were
visited by 565 assessors who
recommended that we be
awarded the ISO 9000 cer-

tificate," Mr. Tulail said.

He added that quality is
one of the key factors in a
country's economic success

on national and world mar-

kets. "Since we are an
export-oriented company,"
Mr. Tulail noted, "we had to
work to achieve the quality
standards in 65% of our pro-
duction which is exported
and marketed worldwide."

According to the Jordanian

Export Development Cor-

poration, many Jordanian

companies are currently in

the process of applying for

the ISO 9000 certificate, and that

by the end of 1996 nearly ten

local firms are expected to be

awarded the certificate.

BUSINESS

A review of news from the Arabic press

Minister expresses reservations over number of insurance companies

★★ THE DEVELOPMENT Council has started discussing seven applications to register insurance companies out of a total of 11 companies which submitted requests to the Ministry of Industry and Trade. The recommendations of the council will be presented to the Cabinet to issue the appropriate decision after conducting the necessary legal studies. In a letter that expressed the ministry's stand on the issue, the minister indicated to the premier that the large number of insurance companies seeking registration "will be a burden on investment... and that their number should be reduced to protect the investment climate in the insurance sector."

The minister said registering such a number would not be feasible and would undoubtedly affect the climate of business in general, due to the small size for this market which does not correspond to the volume of investment. However, the minister stressed in his letter that some of those who are setting up the new companies have the qualifications and the experience in the insurance business while others have no experience in this regard.

The capital of the registered companies presently stands at JD 25.6 million and will rise to JD 37.650 upon increasing their capital to the new required level. By adding JD 30 million, being the capital of the new 11 companies, the overall volume of investment in the insurance sector will amount to JD 69.35 million, or about three fold the current capital in less than two years. Such a rise cannot earn the companies, old or new, reasonable income and will result in a lower return on equity which has averaged 11 per cent for operating companies in the past three years, the letter explained.

It showed that the premiums collected in 1994 amounted to JD 66 million and that expecting the amount to reach JD 107 million, an increase by about 63 per cent, is far from real under all considerations. Pointing out that premiums have historically increased by eleven per cent over the past three years, the minister said that that showed the wide gap between the two percentages and that attaining the target was not realistic no matter how optimistic were the expectations for the national economy.

The seven companies are: Arab Insurers, Falcon, Jordan International, Orient (Al Mashreq), Arab German, Islamic Insurance and Amman Insurance. Four companies have not yet completed the requirements for registration and it is expected that two companies would not continue the registration process. Among the founders of the new companies are financial companies, banks, former ministers and well-known businessmen and personalities in addition to other investors who preferred to pull out of existing companies and establish new ones. Observers and founders of the new companies see increasing the number of insurance firms as enriching the market and raising the level of competition to provide better services (Al Ra'i).

Merchant spreads chlorine on inspectors

★★ THE OWNER of a grocery in the Tareq suburb sprayed chlorine on two inspectors working for the Ministry of Supply. The inspectors entered the shop and asked for a detergent costing 145 fils. The merchant requested 150 fils and, as such, was issued a price violation notice. As the inspectors were leaving the shop, the owner followed them and sprayed them with chlorine. One of the inspectors was hurt in the eye and the other had slight burns on his neck. The minister followed up the case which brought up the issue of providing protection to government employees (Al Aswad).

New salt company formed

★★ A GROUP of private investors and the Arab Potash Company have agreed to establish the first industrial salt factory to utilise Dead Sea salt. The factory's initial capacity will be 1.2 million tonnes of industrial salt and 32,000 tonnes of table salt. According to Mohammad Asfour, vice-chairman of the founding committee, the factory, with a capital of JD 12 million, will start production after six months and will provide 120 employment opportunities. The project, that will carry the name Jordan Al Safi Salt Company, is 51 per cent owned by the holding company, Jordan Dead Sea Industries Company, which has a JD 60 million capital. Mr. Asfour said Transalt chemicals will market 80 per cent of the production for five years starting next June (Al Ra'i).

More fish under inspection

★★ A TEAM of experts is currently in Aqaba to check on a new shipment of frozen fish that arrived in Aqaba. This step was taken following findings that 400 tonnes of fish imported recently from Argentina was not fit for human consumption. The authorities have given the importer three choices: To destroy the quantity, reexport the shipment or turning it into fodder (Al Dustour).

LONDON EXCHANGE RATES

LONDON (R) — Following are the buying and selling rates for leading world currencies and gold against the dollar on the London foreign exchange and bullion markets Friday.

One U.S. dollar	1.3640/50	Canadian dollar
	1.4414/24	Deutschmarks
	1.6144/54	Dutch guilders
	1.1612/22	Swiss francs
	29.62/66	Belgian francs
	4.9456/06	French francs
	1589.4/0.9	Italian lire
	102.59/69	Japanese yen
	6.6570/70	Swedish crowns
	6.3620/70	Norwegian crowns
	5.5832/93	Danish crowns
	1.4155/65	Singapore dollars
	0.7398/03	Australian dollars
	7.7315/45	Hong Kong dollars

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Michael Schumacher

Schumacher calls the tune

PARIS (AFP) — There may be plenty of young princes in Formula One, but Michael Schumacher made it clear in 1995 there is only one king. In 1994, Schumacher won a photo-finish for the title, beating Damon Hill by a single point after colliding with his British rival, apparently accidentally, in the final race of the season in Australia.

This year, there could be no arguments.

After an early flurry, in which Hill won two of the first three races, Schumacher spent the rest of the season with Hill languishing in the year-view mirror of his Benetton Renault.

And with nine victories to his credit, Schumacher equalled the record number of wins in a season, set in 1992 by Nigel Mansell.

Victory in both this year's races on home soil, in the German and European Grand Prix, was an obvious delight, as was a quite remarkable triumph in the wet at Spa Francorchamps, when Schumacher, on slicks, out-braked Hill, who was on wets. In theory, it shouldn't have been possible.

The relationship between the two championship rivals, already prickly after 1994's mutual insults, became daggers drawn. Hill twice shunted Schumacher off the track and the verbal vitriol flowed at the earliest opportunity.

Yet to Hill's credit, he still paid tribute to the man who made him look second rate all year long.

Jean Alesi may have

brought Ferrari a rare victory — his maiden triumph after 100 failures — but neither the Frenchman nor veteran Gerhard Berger finished in four of the 17 races.

"It has been a very tough fight this year and I am truly respectful of his ability as a driver. He has shown on numerous occasions that he has extraordinary talent and speed."

Schumacher obviously revelled in his second consecutive world title, but he claimed that it was no longer his major priority.

"As for the future, winning is the only thing I am really interested in," he said. "Prest has 51 victories and it would be nice to catch up. How many times I am champion is not that interesting for me."

FORMULA 1 REVIEW

It's just as well, for the German may well find himself among the also-rans in 1996, when he takes over the reins at Ferrari.

The legendary Italian team dug deep into its pockets to find the estimated \$25 million needed to lure Schumacher away from Benetton. Partnered by the talented but erratic Ulsterman, Eddie Irvine, Schumacher's job is to win a few races in 1996 and the world title in 1997.

Expectations at Ferrari are deliberately being kept low, after the high hopes for 1995 turned out to have been largely misplaced.

Jean Alesi may have

champion Jacques Villeneuve.

The Canadian, whose father Gilles died at the wheel of a Ferrari during practice for the 1982 Belgian Prix, could be the revelation of the season.

Benetton have bought Alessi and Berger as a job lot from Ferrari, leaving Johnny Herbert in the bizarre situation of being without a team after most successful season ever, seeing the first two victories of his career.

But a poignant question mark hovers over the one remaining top drive, Mike Hakkinen's at McLaren.

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Starting time of men's Olympic marathon could be changed

NEW YORK (AP) — Along with giving Michael Johnson an opportunity to pursue an unprecedented sprint double, track and field's world governing body might afford the men's marathoners a cooler starting time at the Atlanta Olympics.

While Johnson's plea to the International Amateur Athletic Federation to have the 200- and 400-metre races separated has been ongoing for several months, it appeared that the request by the men's marathoners to change the starting time had been dead. Now, it has resurfaced.

The marathon issue was rekindled at this month's IAAF gala at Monte Carlo, Monaco, by Arne Ljungqvist of Sweden, medical chairman of the IAAF and a member of the International Olympic Committee.

"Ljungqvist brought up the question about the marathon,

but it was not officially discussed," Ollan Cassell, executive director of USA track and field and an IAAF vice president, said by telephone from USATF's headquarters at Indianapolis.

It will be discussed — along with Johnson's request — at the next IAAF council meeting, at Capetown, South Africa, March 24-25.

The men's marathon is scheduled for 6:30 p.m. est, the final event before the closing ceremonies. Complaints have surfaced from many runners that the timing is bad because of the expected heat and humidity in Atlanta.

"Anita de Frantz — (a U.S. member of the IOC) and some other IOC members have been quoted as saying that if the athletes train for it, they can run it," Cassell said. "But that doesn't necessarily mean that it's right."

"Ljungqvist has recommended that it be held in the morning."

Ljungqvist reportedly wants the marathon to start at 7:30 a.m. Primo Nebiolo, IAAF president, however, has been opposed to the change, saying he would like the marathon to be the final medal event of the games.

Johnson, meanwhile, has said he would not double in the 200 and 400 if the two events conflict. At present, there are two conflicts — on July 29, when the first two rounds of the 200 and the 400 semifinals are scheduled, and on July 31, with the 200 semifinals and 400 final on tap.

Johnson became the first sprinter this century to win both events at the USA championships at Sacramento, California in June, and became the first to win both at the World Cham-

pionships at Goteborg, Sweden, in August. Only one sprinter — Valerie Brisco Hooks — has won both at the Olympics, taking the women's 200 and 400 at the 1984 Los Angeles Games.

Cassell is confident the IAAF will adjust the schedule to afford Johnson a shot at both gold medals.

"There's always a great hero that comes out of the Olympics," Cassell said. "After what happened at Goteborg, Michael could become the big hero of '96 — on the Olympics' 100th anniversary."

"I hope he will be given that opportunity. I think he will be given the opportunity."

Nebiolo already has been given a revised schedule that would separate the 200 and 400. He met with Johnson and his financial adviser, Brad Hunt, at the gala to discuss the matter.

In June, the IAAF

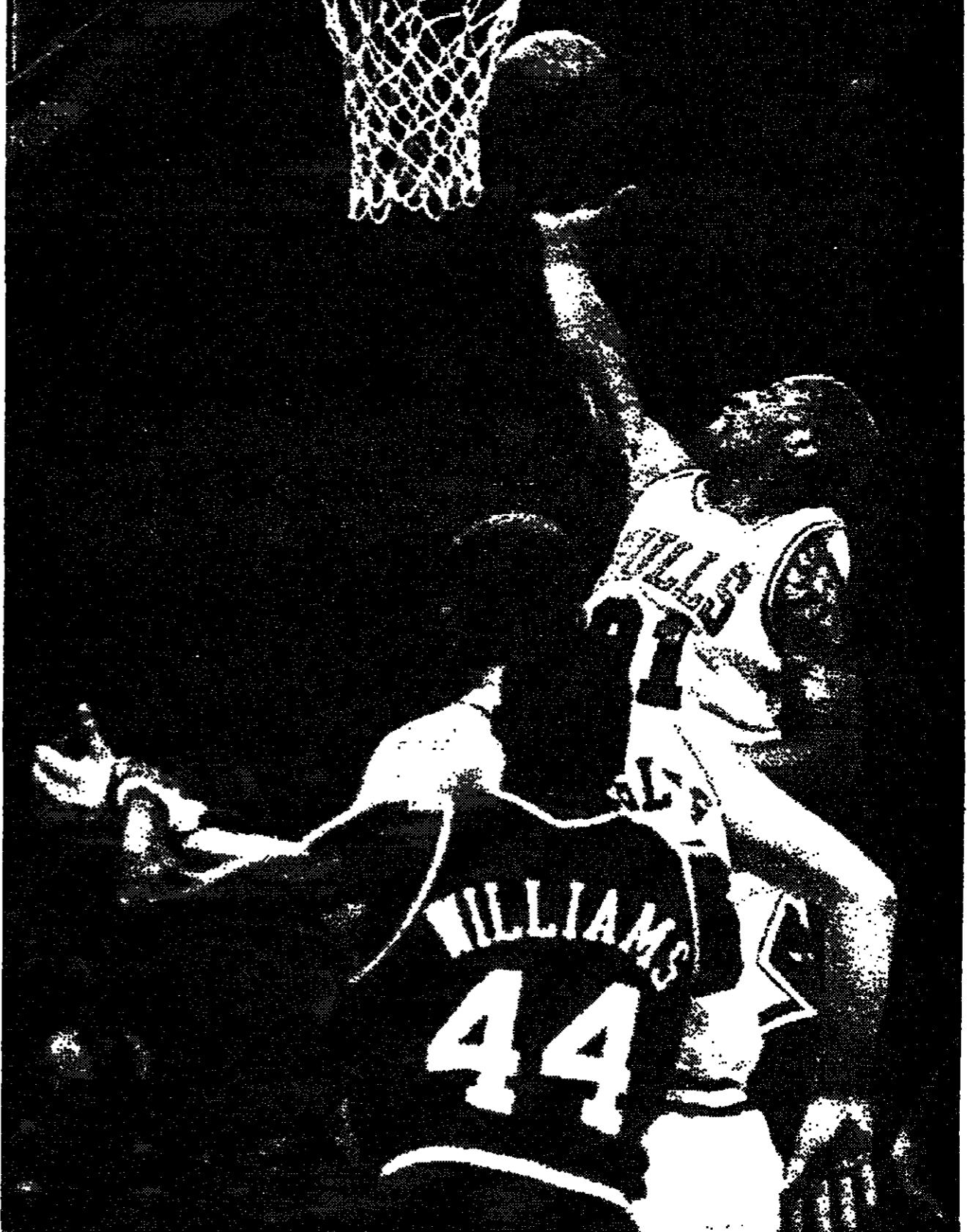
announced a change in the schedule for July 31, allowing more time between the 200 semifinals and the 400 final, but Johnson said that was not satisfactory.

"He can run it easily," Nebiolo said then. "If he runs backward, he can still do it."

"I just hope we can take it a step further and separate the two events," Johnson said.

Dave Maggard, sports director of the Atlanta Committee for the Olympic Games, said "the federation (IAAF) has indicated to me for some time that the schedule is final. Primo hasn't indicated to me that there'll be any change. The IAAF put the schedule together with us, and the one we published is the one they approved."

"And the IOC indicated to us that the schedule is as the schedule is."



Chicago Bulls' Dennis Rodman stretches to reach a rebound under their game in Chicago, in front of teammate Luc Longley and Dallas' Lorenzo Williams (Reuters photo)

Central Division

	W	L	PCT	GB
Chicago	21	2	.913	—
Indiana	12	10	.545	8½
Cleveland	12	12	.500	9½
Atlanta	11	12	.478	10
Charlotte	12	14	.462	10½
Detroit	11	13	.458	10½
Milwaukee	7	15	.318	13½
Toronto	8	18	.308	14½

STANDINGS

EASTERN CONFERENCE				
Atlantic Division				Midwest Division
	W	L	PCT	GB
Orlando	19	6	.760	—
New York	18	6	.750	½
Miami	13	10	.565	5
Washington	12	11	.522	6
Boston	11	12	.478	7
New Jersey	9	13	.409	8½
Philadelphia	5	17	.227	12½

WESTERN CONFERENCE

	W	L	PCT	GB
Houston	19	6	.760	—
San Antonio	15	7	.682	2½
Utah	17	8	.680	2
Denver	11	13	.458	7½
Dallas	7	15	.318	10½
Minnesota	6	16	.273	11½
Vancouver	4	22	.154	15½

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Igor Kostadin (right) of CSKA Moscow struggles to control the ball with Thierry Bicchetti from behind, during the Euroclubs Basketball Champions match in Moscow on December 21 (Reuters photo)

European Clubs' Championship roundup

LONDON (R) — Result on Friday of a men's European Clubs' Basketball Championship semifinal series

FIFA, UEFA: don't panic over Bosman

GENEVA (R) — The governing bodies of European and world soccer on Friday urged national associations not to panic over a European court ruling that current transfer rules and restrictions on foreign players were illegal.

In a joint statement likely to bring them into even sharper conflict with Brussels, UEFA and FIFA also said they did not consider the ruling applied to European club competitions and did not in any case intend to change European soccer rules before next season.

Officials from both organisations met at FIFA headquarters in Zurich on Thursday to discuss the implications of last week's judgement in the case brought by Belgian player Jean-Marc Bosman. More meetings are planned early next year.

The statement said both FIFA and UEFA were convinced that the court's finding that a UEFA rule limiting the number of foreign players in a team to three applied to European competitions "in which teams represent not only themselves, but also their countries."

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The bidding
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Is 'Iron Mike' too rusty to succeed?

PARIS (APP) — There were a lot of worried faces in professional boxing at the end of 1995.

The mushrooming of the number of organisations running the sport did nothing to boost boxing's fragile credibility and fight fans almost needed pocket computers to find their way through the maze of WBA, WBC, IBF, WBU, WBO, IBC, WBF, IBO champions, rankings and regulations.

And those hoping that the return of Mike Tyson would bring some semblance of order to at least the heavyweight division were beginning to revise their opinions when the former champion staged an unimpressive comeback.

Released from an Indiana prison cell in March after serving three years for raping a beauty contestant, Tyson spent just ten minutes in the ring dispatching two "no-hoppers."

In his first bout in August he stopped the unknown Peter McNeely after just 89 seconds and four months later he laid out the large-girthed Buster Mathis Jr. in nine rounds.

But despite the wins, he did not impress.

There was no sign of the old Tyson, whose crude and awesome strength was legendary during his reign as undisputed world champion from 1986 until his shock loss to Buster Douglas in Tokyo five years ago.

Against the crowding Mathis, Tyson's power was neutralised. He was made to look awkward and when he did manage to find space to let fly, he was hopelessly off target with his punches.

Mathis' tactics prolonged the fight but they could not prevent the inevitable, however. And when Tyson at last connected with an uppercut to his fans, cornermen and not least promoter Don King, breathed a hugh sigh of relief which could be heard above the sickening thud of Mathis crashing to the canvas.

The former champion's ring rust had been so evident, however, that it prompted Britain's 34-year-old WBC champion and pantomime king Frank Bruno, who lays his title on the line against Tyson next March, to boast: "Mike is there for the taking."

"He don't look right. I'll knock him out in five rounds. He's been out of boxing for too long."

Many scoffed at the 6ft 3in Bruno's words, remembering that he was badly beaten in five rounds when he first fought Tyson in 1989.

Bu the American was then in his prime and his victory came before divorce ended his stormy marriage with actress Robin Givens and his subsequently fatal meeting with beauty contestant Debra Washington.

After beating Mathis, Tyson put on a brave front: "I knew every move he was making. I'm the best at that style of fighting," he said.

But the former champion is running behind schedule.

His fight with Buster Mathis had to be postponed for six weeks when he broke his thumb during training, and he now has less than twelve weeks to whip himself into top shape for the title showdown.

Bruno, who has a record of 40 wins from 44 contests, became the first British-born boxer this century to win the heavyweight title when he survived a lot of late pressure to score a unanimous points victory over Oliver McCall at Wembley in September.

It was a plucky performance made sweeter by the fact that McCall had taken the world title by stopping Britain's Canadian-born Lennox Lewis in 1994.

Before facing Bruno, McCall had only one outing in 1995 — against 45-year-old former champion Larry Holmes.

There was no doubt about the validity of the McCall's points victory in the April showdown which finally ended the 22-year-career of a boxer who first held the world title when he beat Mohammad Ali in 1980.

But Holmes was by no means disgraced and he was given a well-deserved ovation by the crowd.

The other reigning heavyweight champions going into 1996 include the WBA's Bruce Seldon, the IBF's Frans Botha and the WBO's Riddick Bowe.

Bowe, generally considered with Lennox Lewis to be the main threat to Tyson's take-over bid for the division, took the WBO championship when he stopped Cuban giant



Mike Tyson

Jorge Luis Gonzalez in the ninth-round in Las Vegas in June.

Five months later he faced former world champion Evander Holyfield for a third time.

Bowe had taken the world title from Holyfield in February 1993 only to lose a rematch nine months later.

BOXING REVIEW

This time Bowe did not risk staking his WBO crown — but he notched up an exciting eighth-round win.

Time however was running out — even for Grandfather George.

With Tyson unavailable, Foreman decided instead to face Michael Moorer next February for what will surely

ring instead to wait for what he hoped would be a final bumper pay-day against Tyson.

Time however was running out — even for Grandfather George.

With Tyson unavailable, Foreman decided instead to face Michael Moorer next February for what will surely

be his final ring.

Schultz, so unlucky against Foreman, was given a chance at the vacant IBF crown in front of his home fans in Stuttgart. His opponent was South African Frans Botha but what was expected to be a formally turned out to be a major upset. He was beaten by a split decision.

Bruce Seldon, 28, who took Foreman's WBA title by stopping fellow-American Tony Tucker in April, staged one successful title defence in 1995 — but it was hardly against a major contender. Four months after beating Tucker, Seldon faced little

known 32-year-old compatriot Joe Hipp who surprised everyone by lasting ten rounds.

Outside of the heavyweight division — Roy Jones was probably the brightest star.

The multi-talented Jones, unbeaten in 36 contests, twice successfully defended his IBF super-middleweight title. He needed just nine rounds of boxing to stop flashy Vinnie Pazienza in June and Tony Thornton in October.

After the failure to organise a showdown with Britain's WBC champion Nigel Benn, Jones decided to move up to light-heavyweight for his next fight and he will face Merqui Sosa of the Dominican Republic in a non-title bout in January.

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Benn scored a traumatic victory over American Gerald McClellan in February — retaining his crown with a tenth round knock-out.

His opponent, however, needed emergency surgery for a blood clot after the contest and it took Benn a lot of soul-searching before he decided to continue his career.

He fought twice more in 1995. In July he stopped unorthodox Italian Vincenzo Nardiello in eight rounds and won again two months later, when he stopped American Danny Perez in seven.

It was Benn's ninth defence and his overall record moved to 42 wins against two losses and one draw.

Britain's other world titleholder at the weight, Chris Eubank, "the man they love to hate" — finally strutted one stride too far and retired. The WBO champion lost for the first time in his career when he was unanimously outpointed by late substitute Steve Collins in County Cork in March.

Eubank, always the showman, milked the publicity of a return in September — but lost again. He called it a day and hung up his gloves.

One category which appeared heading for reunification was the welterweight division.

Puerto Rico's IBF titleholder Felix Trinidad and WBA champion Pernell Whitaker both staged successful title defences in November and announced they wanted to square off against each other in 1996.

Trinidad, unbeaten in 27 bouts, stopped Larry Barnes of the United States in four rounds while Whitaker knocked out fellow-American Jake Rodriguez in six.

Terry Norris also took a step towards reuniting the light-middleweights by adding the IBF title to his WBC crown in December. He unanimously outpointed the IBF's disappointing champion Paul Vaden over twelve rounds.

Vaden, previously unbeaten in 24 outings, was jeered for his lack of combativity by an angry crowd and Norris comfortably notched up his 40th win from 46 contests.

Julio Cesar Chavez continued to reign the junior-welterweight division

NATO troops test new Bosnia mandate

SARAJEVO (Agencies) — British NATO troops fanned out into Serb-held Bosnia Friday testing their new mandate for full freedom of movement as the French prepared for demining in the Bosnian capital, IFOR officials said.

Having begun to establish bases in the northwest of the country in both government and Serb-held areas, British Implementation Force (IFOR) troops started patrols in their sector on Friday.

Lt. Colonel David Shaw, a spokesman for the British forces said: "They are doing patrols and have been up to the edge of (Bosnian Serb-held) Banja Luka where they have met with the Serb soldiers that's around there. It's a low-level liaison."

It was largely without incident though two tracked reconnaissance vehicles were stopped at a Bosnian army checkpoint near the new British base at Sanski Most, Mr. Shaw said. However, an intimidating show of strength was enough to resolve the issue, he added.

"When stopped, both vehicles turned back but returned with two Warriors and were allowed straight through," Mr. Shaw said. The Warrior looks like a tank but is the largest armoured personnel carrier with British forces in Bosnia.

Under their mandate the 60,000 NATO force is permitted to use their impressive armament to establish freedom of movement. In an effort to set the tone for their year-long stay in Bosnia and free up routes throughout the country, troops from both France and Britain have

already torn down or moved checkpoints in a number of sites.

Also on Friday, SRNA, the Bosnian Serb official news agency reported that British troops had taken control of a power station 30 kilometres south of Banja Luka which was due to be "up and running with a couple of days." Mr. Shaw was unable to confirm the report.

Meanwhile in Sarajevo, French troops helped government and Serb soldiers to demine two bridges linking divided parts of the capital on Friday. The idea behind this operation is to make way for the reunification of the city, a spokesman said.

With only a fraction of the planned 60,000 NATO troops in the country, the deployment of additional forces will take time.

The largest contingent of 20,000 U.S. troops, who will patrol the northeast sector of Bosnia, has yet to arrive in any great number. Consequently they are some way behind the British and French.

Lieutenant Colonel Rick Scott said U.S. forces planned to fly 25 planes into the airbase at this northeast Bosnian town Friday after flying 15 planes into the base Thursday.

"Currently we have around 700 men here," Mr. Scott said. "We have pretty much secured the base and we are now flying in a lot more equipment, tentage for the men, vehicles, armour. After we have that in, then we will fly in more men," he added.

There are currently some 21,500 troops in Bosnia, drawn mainly from the ex-

isting U.N. peacekeeping force that handed over responsibility to NATO on Wednesday.

Rayner said there had been "no resistance to IFOR movement and no significant denial of freedom of movement. The signs are of general compliance with the peace agreement."

Admiral Leighton Smith, the overall commander of IFOR, told AFP he was "very encouraged" by the first 48 hours of the NATO operation in Bosnia. "There have been some very positive things and I am encouraged by the attitude of the leadership of the various parties (in Bosnia)."

The leaders of Bosnia's Muslims, Croats and Serbs signed up to a peace settlement earlier this month, ending 44 months of bitter fighting that has seen thousands die, millions displaced and divided the country in two.

Bosnia's rebel Serbs will control one half of the country with a Muslim-Croat federation having authority in the other.

On Thursday, the U.N. ordered a huge international police force to Bosnia to reassure Sarajevo Serbs due to come under government rule as local Serb leaders stepped up a campaign to block the transfer of power.

The United Nations Security Council also condemned Bosnian Serbs for killings and other atrocities and demanded that international groups should have unrestricted access to grave sites, refugees and prisoners.

Search resumes at site of Colombia plane crash

BUGA, Colombia (AFP) — Rescue workers Friday recovered a "black box" from a U.S. jetliner which they hoped could explain how the plane strayed from its course before slamming into a mountain and killing nearly 160 people.

The find came as workers resumed the search for victims of the crash of American Airlines Flight 965, hoping to find more miracle survivors of the fiery accident late Wednesday that claimed nearly 160 lives.

A total of 125 rescue workers with chain saws, hatchets and machetes cut through the woods and brush around the crash site on Mount San Jose. Their early work was hampered by a thick morning fog but this soon cleared.

After a day of wildly conflicting figures, the Red Cross said Friday that six people had been pulled alive from the wreckage of the Boeing 757 but that one died Thursday in hospital.

Aviation officials confirmed Friday that the jetliner, which took off from Miami, was 21 kilometres east of its course from it slammed into the mountain in southwestern Colombia while trying to land in the city Cali.

"In my entire life, I've never seen an aircraft fly over here," said one peasant from the area.

There was no immediate explanation why the aircraft had strayed.

Sudan rejects Egypt's terrorism charges

KHARTOUM (R) — Sudan rejected Friday Egyptian charges that it provided training for members of militant-Islamic groups from other African countries, a statement by Sudan's foreign ministry said.

The statement, carried by Sudan's official news agency SUNA, said that the allegations made by Egypt's Foreign Minister Amr Musa in Addis Ababa this week were "baseless and irresponsible."

Mr. Musa made his allegations against Khartoum at a meeting of African foreign ministers members of a new body created by the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) known as the Con-

flict Resolution Mechanism. It is aimed at solving inter-African disputes.

The Sudanese statement said Egypt's accusations against Khartoum were not the first of their kind, and they were never supported by an evidence.

The statement added.

"Egypt has not presented

any proof to support the allegations despite repeated requests from Sudan that it should do so," the statement said.

Egypt had also not re-

sponded to Sudan's demand to form a joint committee to look into the charges, the statement added.

Relations between Cairo and Khartoum have reached

their lowest after Egypt accused Sudan of hosting suspected militants who carried out a failed assassination attempt against Egypt's President Hosni Mubarak in Addis Ababa last June.

Ethiopia on Thursday fired the opening shot in a campaign to have the U.N. Security Council demand that Sudan hands over three men allegedly involved in the plot to kill Mr. Mubarak.

Tekeda Alemu, Ethiopia's deputy foreign minister, told an informal meeting of council members that his country, as well as Egypt, had done their best to negotiate with Khartoum and regional groups had intervened also.

COLUMN

Man charged with pushing mum, 85, into sea

BARCELONA, Spain (R) — A 55-year-old Spaniard is to stand trial charged with pushing his 85-year-old mother off a Barcelona Harbour quay into the sea, where she drowned. The man then jumped into the water himself to pretend he was trying to save her, court officials told local media.

Dog finds dinosaur bone on British beach

LONDON (R) — A dog has dug up a 118 million-year-old dinosaur bone on a British beach. Jake, a bull terrier, discovered the fossilised arm bone of an iguanodon while out walking with his owner John Winch on a beach on the Isle of Wight off the English south coast. Both

posed proudly with their find for the British media Friday with Jake dwarfed by the bone that is twice his size. "It is an interesting specimen because it is very well preserved and because complete bones of any dinosaur are quite rare," Steve Hutt, curator of the Isle of Wight Geological Museum, told the Daily Telegraph. The plant-eating iguanodon, which weighed up to four tonnes, was one of the earliest dinosaurs to roam the Earth.

China finds mate for rare dolphin

BEIJING (R) — Chinese zoologists have caught an endangered white-fin dolphin in the Yangtze River after a three-year search, giving a male dolphin in captivity a mate, Xinhua News Agency said Friday. "Our darling boy will now have a mate and possibly offspring to escape extinction," Xinhua quoted an unidentified expert as saying of Tuesday's capture. The 10-year-old female dolphin, 2.29 metres (7.5 ft) long, was under observation at a reserve — a 21-kilometre stretch of the old course of the Yangtze near the central city of Wuhan, it said. Scientists hoped to begin artificial breeding soon, Xinhua said. An 18-year-old male dolphin is kept at the Institute of Hydrobiology of the Chinese Academy of Sciences in Wuhan. Nicknamed China's "panda in water," the white-fin dolphin has swum China's mighty Yangtze River for centuries but is now listed by China and international animal groups as a first-class endangered species. The number of freshwater white-fin dolphins in China has plunged to about 100 and the endangered freshwater animal could become extinct within 25 years. The dolphins' main enemies are water pollution, nets and other fishing tackle and flourishing Yangtze shipping business. The Yangtze receives a staggering 37 per cent of China's waste water — some 12.8 billion tonnes a year — posing an enormous threat to the dolphins, which numbered 187 in 1986, the Legal Daily has said.

Strike reins in French flutters on the horses

PARIS (R) — A six-day strike at France's off-track betting monopoly is depriving thousands of would-be punters of a flutter on the horses. A spokesman for the state-run Pari Mutuel Urbain (PMU) said the strike, over salaries and jobs, had affected the system's computer network. The unions believe that a modernisation of the computer system due in 1997 will cause the loss of hundreds of jobs from a total workforce of 1,700.

Hussein Kamel opposes federal Iraq

AMMAN (R) — Iraqi defector Lieutenant-General Hussein Kamel Hassan said on Friday he would leave his sanctuary if Jordan supported a federal Iraq in a post-Saddam regime.

"If Jordan took any measures that practically call for... or gathers the Iraqi opposition in the direction of, federation or confederation in Iraq, I will leave Jordan immediately," Gen. Kamel told Reuters in a telephone interview.

He was talking from a secret location where he has sheltered since taking refuge after fleeing from Iraqi President Saddam Hussein on Aug. 8.

Gen. Kamel said the idea of federalism was a recipe for the division of Iraq, saying that Iraq had been united throughout its history, despite its ethnic mix.

"I will fight with steadfastness and courage any idea of this kind... We cannot allow any one to talk of ideas that speak of federalism or confederation in Iraq. Iraq is united by its people, land and water," he said.

King Hussein told Jordanian journalists on Thursday that the idea of a federation (grouping the three major components of the population — the Kurds in the north, the Sunni Muslims who dominate under President Saddam, and the Shiite Muslims who are the largest group) is only one of the options that the Iraqis might consider for the future, adding that he mentioned this formula after having heard from some Iraqis. He also stressed that it is up to the Iraqis themselves to determine the political shape of their country.

Gen. Kamel said he fled Iraq in August due to wrong policies adopted by President Saddam that was leading to Iraq's destruction and would not compromise on a strong and united Iraq.

"I left as result of mistakes, but the talk and work towards federalism or confederation is not only a mistake, but a great crime against the Iraqi people and also a great crime against Arab countries that would lead to disintegration."

Gen. Kamel, who ran Iraq's secret military programme, fled with his brother Saddam Kamel and their



Press Statement Condemnation of Ken Saro-Wiwa The True Story

1. In recent times Nigeria has been the object of unjustified worldwide condemnation over the sentences passed on the late Mr. Ken Saro-Wiwa and eight other Ogoni citizens. The erroneous impression has been created that Mr. Ken Saro-Wiwa and his kinsmen were charged and sentenced to death for their human rights and environmental protection activities. Based on this pervasive impression a campaign of misinformation has been orchestrated by the western media against the Nigerian government. The Embassy of Nigeria, Baghdad wishes to seize this opportunity to categorically state that contrary to the widely held view Mr. Ken Saro-Wiwa was charged and sentenced for masterminding, instigating and perpetrating the cold-blooded murder of four prominent Ogoni citizens.
2. Anyone without a sound knowledge of the politics of Ogoniland will find it naturally difficult to comprehend how a renowned playwright, human rights activist and environmental protectionist like the late Mr. Ken Saro-Wiwa, could at the same time be an assassin. It is our hope that the following passage will help clear these doubts.
3. Ogoniland from where Ken Saro-Wiwa hailed is one of the many areas where Nigeria gets its crude oil. As a result of oil exploration in Ogoniland and indeed the entire riverine areas where petroleum exploration is taking place some form of environmental degradation is inevitable. It was in an effort to redress the situation that some prominent Ogoni citizens formed the Movement For the Survival of Ogoni People (MOSOP) in 1990 as a pressure group using non-violent methods to pursue its objectives. Mr. Ken Saro-Wiwa later joined the movement and was made its spokesperson.
4. Once admitted into MOSOP however, Mr. Ken Saro-Wiwa grew impatient with what he perceived, as the rather palliative approach of the foundation members of MOSOP and unilaterally took steps with the aid of other radical elements to turn MOSOP into a violent and militant organisation with a paramilitary wing. Thus, under Ken Saro-Wiwa's leadership MOSOP abandoned its non-violent posture and became a law unto itself, unleashing a reign of terror, campaign of calumny, blackmail, vilification and destruction of property against other Ogonis who were opposed to their methods.
5. So, when it became clear that MOSOP and the various subsidiaries created by Mr. Ken Saro-Wiwa had become violent and uncontrollable, the original founders of the organisation parted ways with MOSOP. This it is believed enraged Mr. Ken Saro-Wiwa whose MOSOP now sacked police post in Ogoniland, printed its own national flag, composed its own anthem, harassed law enforcement agents, chased out magistrates from court sessions, beat up oil workers, blew up oil installations and made the entire Ogoniland unsafe for habitation and normal business transactions to the extent that Shell Petroleum Development company operating in Ogoniland was forced to abandon its operations in the area. At this point MOSOP had become an instrument in Ken Saro-Wiwa's hands for anti establishment and criminal activities. MOSOP disrupted the June 12 presidential elections in Ogoniland by chasing out electoral officers and burning ballot boxes.
6. And finally on May 21, 1994 at an assembly in the palace of an Ogoni traditional ruler, MOSOP youths acting on instructions from Ken Saro-Wiwa swooped on the assembly, beat up people, inflicted serious injuries to some and picked up all the original founders of MOSOP who had disagreed with Ken Saro-Wiwa's tactics. They then forced them into a Volkswagen car registration No. RV 6165 PB and set the car ablaze killing its occupants. Among those killed were: I. Mr. Albert Baday, a former permanent secretary, state minister and later secretary to the Rivers State government. II. Chief Edward N. Kobani, former state minister, deputy president of MOSOP and former publicity secretary of the Social Democratic Party (SDP). III. Chief Samuel Orage, former state minister and IV. His brother chief T.B. Orage, secretary to the Gokana council of chiefs. It is interesting to note that western media has been inexplicably silent on these murders. In fact, western opinion has been so one-sided that their governments deliberately frustrated efforts by members of the slain families to put their case abroad by refusing them entry visas.
7. As no responsible government will tolerate or condone such anarchy, government quickly arrested the perpetrators of this heinous crime. Mr. Ken Saro-Wiwa, the mastermind of this brutal murder, initially went into hiding but was eventually arrested and together with his collaborators brought before a civil disturbances tribunal which has jurisdiction to deal with such matters under Nigerian law. The trials revealed incontrovertible evidence that Ken Saro-Wiwa masterminded, instigated and perpetrated this heinous crime.
8. Contrary to criticism that the Ogoni trial was unfair, and flawed, the truth remains that the trial was fair, open and in accordance with acceptable standards. The accused persons were not only allowed legal representation of their choice, they also had unrestricted access to their counsel. Our system of judicial tribunal is part and parcel of British common law and practice which is one of the main sources of the Nigerian legal system. Besides Britain many other countries use this system of adjudication.
9. It is indeed an irony of circumstance that the same western world that condemns the Ogoni trial in Tribunals applauds the trial of drug traffickers and advance fee fraud suspects in the same tribunals. More significantly the same western world that considered as "flawed" a trial which passed death sentence on Ken Saro-Wiwa and others is pressuring the Nigerian government to adopt death penalty for drug related offences.
10. The Embassy of Nigeria wishes to reiterate that Nigeria is not only fully aware of worldwide demands for democratisation, respect for human rights and the establishment of the rule of law, Nigeria has more than demonstrated its commitment to these goals. Nigeria fought proudly and willingly, shoulder-to-shoulder with its African brothers to liberate its continent from colonial domination. Nigeria stretched its resources to support the anti-apartheid struggle in order to restore dignity to the black race. Nigeria can not now possibly be said to be anti-democracy and anti-human rights; values for which it has clearly devoted so much of its material and human resources to defend and uphold. The late Mr. Ken Saro-Wiwa masterminded the brutal murder of his kith and kin and government has responsibility to ensure that justice took its course.

Embassy of Nigeria
Baghdad
December 18, 1995